



January 25, 2016

Ms. Karen M. McCarthy
Clerk, Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

As required by Budget Resolution 71 and in response to your letter of December 15, 2015, enclosed please find a list of VBN personnel, job descriptions, 2016 Budget, 2016 Business Plan and 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require any additional information. I can be reached at 716-961-0200 or kaler@visitbuffaloniagara.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick J. Kaler".

Patrick J. Kaler
President and CEO

/Enclosures



Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.
Employee Listing
2016

Name		Department	Job Title	Hire Date	Annual Salary
Kaler	Patrick	Administration & Finance	President/CEO	01/06/14	
Marzo	David	Administration & Finance	Chief Financial Officer	03/16/98	
Smith	Judy	Administration & Finance	Director of Administration & HR	03/14/88	
Butlak	Michele	Administration & Finance	Accounting/Benefits Mgr.	07/18/05	
Benzel	Kathleen	Administration & Finance	Information Technology/Project Manager	03/18/87	
Even	Michael	Convention Sales & Services	VP of Sales & Services/Sports Commission	04/01/94	
D'Agostino	Linda	Convention Sales & Services	Director of Sales, NYS Associations & Government Relations-Albany Office	10/01/05	
Harvey	Peter	Convention Sales & Services	Director of Sports Development	05/29/07	
Giglia	Charles	Convention Sales & Services	Director of Sports Sales	05/17/99	
White	Lori	Convention Sales & Services	National Sales Manager	01/04/10	
Mueller	Leah	Convention Sales & Services	Director of Tourism Sales	03/19/01	
Williamson	Dionne	Convention Sales & Services	Multicultural Sales Manager	03/22/04	
Pawarski	Allison	Convention Sales & Services	Sports Services Manager	07/01/15	
Cox	Karen	Convention Sales & Services	Convention Services Manager	03/25/03	
Martell	Tracey	Convention Sales & Services	Convention Services Manager	12/10/07	
Pastor	Danielle	Convention Sales & Services	Sales/Marketing Assistant/Database Coordinator	07/01/13	
Healy	Edward	Marketing	Vice President of Marketing	04/23/01	
Steinberg	Matthew	Marketing	Director of Creative Services	07/12/99	
Fashana	Karen	Marketing	Director of Marketing	08/17/00	
Hayden	Brian	Marketing	Communications Manager	02/01/14	
Kincaide	Cynthia	Sales/Marketing	Director of Industry Relations & Destination Development	02/28/11	
Drews	Denise	Brisbane Visitor Center	Visitor Center Manager	10/21/91	
Centurione	Giovanni	Brisbane Visitor Center	Information Specialist - Part-time	06/04/10	
Poleto	Mary Jane	Airport Visitor Center	Airport Visitor Center Manager - Part-time	05/07/12	
Donovan	Cynthia	Airport Visitor Center	Information Specialist - Part-time	10/29/15	
Ehrke	Pamela	Airport Visitor Center	Information Specialist - Part-time	05/06/13	
Ormsby	Tabitha	Airport Visitor Center	Information Specialist - Part-time	03/01/14	
McCarthy	Sandra	Airport Visitor Center	Information Specialist - Part-time	10/29/15	
Baltner	Joanne	Airport Visitor Center	Information Specialist - Part-time	10/25/15	
Mikulec	Debra	Airport Visitor Center	Information Specialist - Part-time	02/06/15	
Eagan	Vicki	Airport Visitor Center	Information Specialist - Part-time	06/11/15	
DiChristina	Joyce	Airport Visitor Center	Information Specialist - Part-time	09/15/15	
Robb	Kathy	Airport Visitor Center	Information Specialist - Part-time	09/15/15	

**Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.
Buffalo Niagara Convention Center Management Corporation, Inc.
Position Description
President/Chief Executive Officer**

President/Chief Executive Officer

The President is the chief executive officer of the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc. (the “Bureau”) and the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center Management Corporation, Inc. (“BNCCMC”).

The President and CEO has the primary responsibility of accomplishing the mission of the Bureau and BNCCMC through achievement of the objectives set forth in the Strategic Plan and the annual Marketing Plan. The President and CEO leads these community-based organizations while successfully maintaining the day-to-day managerial duties. The President/CEO is responsible for aligning all functions, systems and processes within the organization and building organizational commitment to common goals. The President and CEO must also lead and manage the organizations’ human assets, ensuring that the necessary performance processes are in place.

Reporting Relationship

The President shall report to the Chairman of the Board of the Bureau/BNCCMC and/or Officers Committee.

Duties and Responsibilities

The President is responsible for the operation of the Bureau and BNCCMC and for the accomplishment of their missions:

1. Drives all administrative, operating, marketing and sales functions of the Bureau and BNCCMC.
2. Drives the preparation and implementation of the Bureau’s and BNCCMC’s annual Marketing Plans, designed to effectuate the goals and objectives of the organizations; and allocates and manages the resources of the organizations as necessary to accomplish such objectives.
3. Prepares the Bureau’s and BNCCMC’s annual budgets, providing for the appropriate allocation of the projected resources to implement the Marketing Plan and goals of the organization; and oversees the financial affairs of the Bureau.
4. Implements the execution of the strategies, objectives and goals as set forth in the long range Strategic Plan.

5. Directs the staff of the Bureau and BNCCMC to maximize productivity and, in particular, is responsible to the Board for the performance by Bureau and department heads of their respective duties and responsibilities.
6. Establishes strong collaborative relationships with all stakeholder groups and evaluates their input and concerns; this includes government (County, City, State), hospitality industry partners, community and business organizations (BNP, BNE).
7. Effectively communicate a vision for the organization to diverse audiences and engages the community in the mission of the Bureau and BNCCMC.
8. Identifies and drives alternative revenue sources to the organization, such as state, city, federal, foundation, sponsorships, etc.
9. Directs and oversees public relations activities of the Bureau and serves as the face and voice of the organization and the industry throughout the community.
10. Attends all meetings of the Board and other designated committees and provides reports to each.
11. Serves as a member of the Nominating and Board Development Committee, assists the Committee in identifying potential Board members, assists the Committee in recruiting new Board members; orients new Board members concerning the mission, goals, policies and activities of the Bureau and BNCCMC; and assists the Board and its individual members in carrying out their duties as Directors.
12. Develops and maintains effective organizational policies and ensures all Bureau activities are implemented within these established policies, guidelines, laws and ethical standards.
13. Responsible for achieving performance measurements established by the Board of Directors for the organization and individuals.
14. Performs such other duties as may be assigned by the Chairman and/or Board from time to time.

**BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU FOUNDATION, INC.
BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION CENTER MANAGEMENT CORPORATION, INC.**

JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Chief Financial Officer
STATUS: Full-time (*Exempt Position*)
REPORTS TO: President/CEO

SUMMARY – CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Serves as chief financial officer and directs financial affairs of the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc. (the “BNCVB”), The Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau Foundation, Inc. (the “Foundation”) and the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center Management Corporation, Inc. (“BNCCMC”). As such, the CFO has the primary responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the financial position of the organization and the achievement of the objectives from a financial perspective as set forth in the Marketing Plan. Develops and directs organization’s financial and human resource policies and procedures, financial management procedures, prepares financial statements and reports and manages accounting personnel.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Coordinates budget planning and approval process; produces and publishes annual budgets for BNCVB, The Foundation and BNCCMC.
- Monitors budget and prepares reports which summarize and forecast activity and financial position in areas of income, expense, earnings and net assets, assets and liabilities, based on past, present and projected operations.
- Establishes and monitors a system of internal controls to safeguard assets and maintain the integrity of BNCVB, Foundation and BNCCMC operations and transactions.
- Review vendor/service contracts for compliance and informs appropriate personnel of results, termination/renewal dates, insurance and other contractual requirements.
- Reviews and approves disbursements; supervises accounts payable; signs checks.
- Reviews and approves financial transactions subject to approval of the President.
- Directs the Treasurer in activities as custodian of funds, securities and assets.
- Review and approves single and multi year contracts; advises management of problems and opportunities with contracts.
- Reviews and monitors purchasing activities of department heads.
- Analyze, review and monitor hotel tax collections; assist county government with annual budgeting of projected hotel tax revenues and reports to the President and Board regarding the same.

- Maintains banking relationships and investment policies; monitors bank transactions and bank account reconciliations.
- Advises management about insurance coverage for protection against losses and potential liabilities.
- Advises management on desirable operational adjustments so as to comply with tax code provisions; monitors tax code revisions to ensure compliance.
- Arranges for audits of BNCVB, Foundation and BNCCMC books and accounts.
- Supervises the maintenance of all financial records. Directs the periodic review of these records to assure completeness.
- Prepares reports for regulatory agencies and various taxing authorities.
- Supervises payroll and human resources functions.
- Responds to request for financial information from department heads. Assists them with interpretation and budget management issues
- Provides support assistance and training to accounting personnel in the use of various computer applications in an effort to increase efficiency and productivity.
- Conducts special projects as assigned by the President/CEO and Board.
- Active involvement in development of revenue generating initiatives.
- Performs other related duties.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Four year degree from an academic institution accredited in accounting; MBA/CPA.
- Five to seven years related experience and training.
- Good judgment, integrity and extensive management experience.
- Good verbal and communication skills.
- Strong accounting and computer skills; ability to manage staff.

Employee Signature

President/CEO

Rev 01/12
D. Marzo

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Director of Administration & HR

STATUS: Full-time (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: President/CEO

SUMMARY:

Manage the day-to-day general business operations of the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau under the direction of the President and serves as executive assistant to the President.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Work with senior staff in developing a coordinated and integrated marketing and operations effort, consistent with the marketing plan and budget.
- Recruit new and replacement of administrative personnel. Review resumes, conduct initial interviews and make recommendations for subsequent interviews of qualified candidates with department heads.
- Oversee and coordinate purchasing and maintaining all office equipment (with assistance from Information Technology Manager). Coordinate computer software and other equipment training for staff.
- Perform the duties of the office of Corporate Secretary as required by the by-laws of the corporation for the CVB and Convention Center Boards. Maintain corporate minute books and by-laws. Coordinate monthly meetings, including location, catering, audio/visual requirements.
- Serve as staff liaison to the Officers Committee, Board of Directors, Search Committee, Strategic Planning Committee and other Board committees.
- Coordinate and participate in By-Laws/Governance Committee meetings. Work with Committee on developing Conflict of Interest Policy, By-Law Revisions, and other governance-related matters.
- Work with Film Commissioner on various administrative projects such as development of new website, City funding contract, budgeting, economic impact report, location scouts, follow up on emails and telephone calls.
- Work with attorneys on various corporate matters such as incorporation documentation and 501(c)(3) application for Sports Commission.
- Assist Vice Presidents with job postings, interviews and follow up to potential candidates.

- Responsible for coordinating administrative coverage during vacations, personal appointments, illness, etc.
- Oversee the activities of non-exempt staff (administrative) and provide input to senior staff.
- Responsible for scheduling and coordinating executive management meetings and full staff meetings.
- Serve as executive assistant to the President, which includes management and coordination of calendar, travel arrangements, preparation of correspondence, reports, and annual marketing plan.
- Oversee and coordinate Visitor Guide advertising sales with outside sales representative.
- Provide office orientation and equipment training/programming for new staff.
- Carry out operational and managerial level tasks on behalf of the President.
- Counsel department managers and support staff on personnel issues.
- Oversee/coordinate CVB Board events and projects as determined by President.
- Recommend and coordinate any changes to office layout. Coordinate all logistics related to office moves.
- Coordinate with building management for maintenance/cleaning required in leased office space.
- Maintain inventory of all office stationery and coordinate printing when necessary.
- Responsible for ordering all office supplies, furniture and equipment.
- Responsible for coordination of staff functions and events.
- Provide copy proofing/editing services for CVB newsletter, annual report, visitor guide, etc.
- Perform all other related duties as required or requested.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Accounting and Benefits Manager

STATUS: Full-Time; (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: Chief Financial Officer

SUMMARY:

Directs and coordinates human resources activities, such as employment, compensation, benefits, training and employee services. Maintains accounts receivable and payable functions and provides monthly analysis. Assist with data entry, review of reports and other support duties. Assist CFO in administration/management of all financial, accounting and benefit/human resource operations and policies of the CVB.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Maintains all files, controls copies and reports related to accounts payable.
- Processes accounts payable invoices and expense reports ensuring Bureau policies, government and IRS regulations are followed.
- Reconciles monthly accounts payable to general ledger and vendors.
- Processes and audits 1099's at year end.
- Opens and distributes all company mail.
- Prepares Customer Invoices and follow up on open receivables.
- Processes monthly accounts receivable billing statements.
- Posts all journal entries and maintains journals and subsidiary ledgers of accounts receivable and accounts payable and balances and reconciles accounts monthly.
- Assists with year end audit process.
- Plans and conducts new employee orientation to foster positive attitude toward Bureau's goals.
- Process employee separation notices and related documentation, and conducts exit interviews to determine reasons behind separations.
- Maintains and monitors an effective employee relations program.

- Maintains records of insurance coverage, pension plan and personnel transactions such as hires, promotions, performance reviews and terminations.
- Investigates accidents and prepares reports for insurance.
- Oversees the analysis, maintenance and communication of records required by law or local governing bodies or other departments in the organization.
- Monitors and administers performance evaluations for all wage and salaried personnel.
- Administers payroll procedures, time off accruals, and timely distribution of paychecks.
- Any other duties as assigned.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

Rev 1/12
M. Butlak

VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Information Technology/Project Manager

STATUS: Part-time (Regular) (*Non-Exempt position*)

REPORTS TO: Chief Financial Officer

SUMMARY:

Manage all aspects of information systems and equipment services for Visit Buffalo Niagara, manage ongoing and special projects, and assist Accounting Department.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Information Technology

- Performs system management duties including troubleshooting, solving/repairing problems, data management, user operations, training on hardware/software, and communication with outside vendors/consultants. Act as a resource to VBN staff with regards to computer-related and/or special projects or events.
- Analyze computer information systems (hardware and software), research and make recommendations regarding upgrade and/or replacement, to best serve needs of VBN.
- Make recommendations regarding staff training and identify training opportunities. Provide quarterly software training sessions.
- Maintain efficiency and maintenance of all electronic and digital equipment. Serve as network administrator, to include new user setup, e-mail accounts, daily backup, and network operations.
- Identify, manage and implement technology related to servers, workstations, telephone equipment, telephone systems, printers, postage and fax machines, including maintenance, programming and training.
- Maintain inventory of computer equipment and software to include serial number, model number, location of equipment and date purchased.
- Assist with the development of PowerPoint and Keynote presentations for VBN staff as required. Setup equipment at presentation venues as needed.
- Develop and maintain Technology/Network Security Policy and Technology Plan (to be included in DMAI Accreditation Application).

Ongoing Projects

- Maintain Media/Public Relations module in Simpleview CRM, documenting media coverage as generated.
- Work with CFO and Director of Creative services to create, distribute and track monthly Travel Pulse newsletter.
- Input partner in-kind contributions and paid partner services into Simpleview CRM.
- Proofread/edit promotional/organizational printed materials prior to publication.

Accounting

- Complete weekly filing for Accounting Department.
- Assist with accounts payable data entry.
- Assist with monthly Visitor Center inventory.
- Perform other duties as requested and required.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

K. Benzel
2/2015

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Vice President of Sales and Services/Commissioner Sports Commissions

STATUS: Full-time (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: President/CEO

SUMMARY:

The Vice President of Convention Sales and Services/Commissioner of the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission shall be responsible for the day to day activities of the Convention Sales, Amateur Sports Sales, Special Events and Sports logistics, as well as the Convention Services Department and their programs.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Supervise the Staff of the Convention Sales, Sports Commission, Special Events and Services Departments.
- Prepare the annual budget and marketing plan and strategies for the Convention Sales, Sports Commissions, Special Events and Services Departments.
- Analyze market segments and determine direction for sales efforts.
- Assigns all new accounts, manage all client site inspections, evaluate convention and event, bids, sales presentations, sales blitzes and familiarization tours, oversee local organized committees (LOC) as necessary, oversee event marketing and sports related grant applications.
- Attend meetings and committees relative to the Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and Services Departments.
- Coordinate and monitor workflow including assigning, transferring and deleting accounts.
- Maintains statistical data pertaining to conventions held, conventions booked and their economic impact on our community.
- Develop a program for the timely contact of Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and Services Department accounts through personal, electronic and written communication by sales managers.
- Review all leads, definites and cancellations for Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and Services Departments to ensure accuracy.

- Assemble convention information from hotels and compile accurate projections of Bureau/hotel bookings.
- Maintain a high profile in the convention association community as well as the local hospitality community.
- Coordinate efforts of the Convention Marketing Committee and subsequent subcommittees by acting as liaison to Directors of Sales and/or General Managers of the hotels and the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- Maintain close working relationships with the area hotels, municipal facilities and serve as liaison between the client and these facilities.
- Coordinate sales effort of the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center with the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau sales staff.
- Oversee all travel schedules of all sales managers and prospective clients, client entertainment; negotiate event sponsorships to be within budget projection.
- Prepare and disseminate all sales and service reports.
- Work with computer services and database software provider to maintain fully functional system for sales and services department. Review software on a regular basis to ensure effectiveness and make recommendations accordingly.
- Direct and train sales managers and services staff in all matters pertaining to convention and amateur sport event sales, maintain periodicals and sales tools for this purpose.
- Oversee sales incentive program for Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and Services staff.
- Oversee memberships in pertinent convention/meeting/exhibit/amateur sports trade organizations.
- Develops promotional sales material for Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and Services marketing.
- Works closely with communications department in all Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and Services public relations opportunities and advertising projects.
- Conduct weekly sales meetings with departmental staff to discuss up coming conventions, outstanding leads and special projects.
- Perform all other duties as may be required.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

**BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION**

POSITION: Director of Sales New York State Associations & Government Relations
Albany Office

STATUS: Full-time (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: V.P. President of Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and
Services

SUMMARY:

Promotes and sells Buffalo as a convention and meeting destination for New York State Associations, NYS Government, Labor Unions, & Multi-Level Marketing group; achieves specific room night sales goals as assigned.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Manage regional office activities, coordinated with the Buffalo office operations.
- Generate convention center and hotel bookings from the New York State Association and Multi-Level Marketing groups.
- Network with our New York State Delegation to promote tourism issues that are important to the local hospitality community.
- Creates and maintains client base in the assigned region of market; assigned an annual room night goal, to be achieved from definite bookings within this market.
- Develops and maintains professional relationships with clients; consults daily newspapers, business journals and other sources to uncover local members of New York State Associations.
- Telephones for prospects, writes or makes presentations to local members of New York State and regional associations to enlist their aid in booking future conventions.
- Makes written or personal presentations to boards of directors, convention delegates or site selection committees across the United States as needed in order to book an organization at the destination's various convention sites.
- Attends tradeshow, sales missions, networking meetings and local meetings to solicit convention business; responsible for pre-planning, target marketing, pre and post mailers and all booth arrangements for assigned tradeshow.

- Coordinates and conducts site tours for meeting planners, showcasing facilities and attractions in the city. Participates in familiarization (fams) programs for groups of meeting planners from across the country; responsible for inviting qualified New York State Association clients to each fam.
- Analyzes tradeshow values to determine best return on the company's money.
- Assist meeting planners with referrals to services manager or other service providers to capitalize on sales opportunities that benefit the community.
- During convention/meeting, maintain contact with executive meeting planner, upon completion of the convention have immediate contact with the individual(s) responsible for decision of returning in future year(s).
- May be responsible for developing and implementing a sales training program.
- Maintain research on competition regarding their marketing and sales strategies.
- Work closely with the Communications Department to assist in garnering proper public relations, press and media opportunities for secured conventions.
- Files written reports that coincide with the annual market actions such as: sales trips, tradeshow results, etc.
- Assist in the preparation of the annual budget and marketing plan.
- Perform all other duties as required or requested.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

L. D'Agostino
01/10

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Director of Sports Development

STATUS: Full-time (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: V.P. of Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and Services

SUMMARY:

Responsible for sales and marketing activities that promote the area to meeting planners for their amateur sporting events, conventions, trade shows, and conferences.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Solicit by phone, letter, direct mail and personal sales calls within assigned markets: National Governing Bodies, Amateur Sports disciplines and rights holders who have the potential to bring events to Buffalo.
- Prepare comprehensive bid proposals as required by National Governing Body. This will include but is not limited to collecting hotel room block information from hotel and motels outlining availability and rates for hotel rooms and competition sites, in addition to any other pertinent material required in RFP.
- Assist in the development of marketing brochures and other collateral material to be used in the overall sales effort.
- Maintain an effective filing system to allow for orderly contact and follow up to potential event planners that would consider the Buffalo/Niagara area as a host to their event. Maintain assigned computer files, as well as the creation of new files through new business development.
- Make personal bid presentations to sporting/special event organizations as required.
- Help supervise the coordination of housing of attendees and registration services if needed.
- Work closely with the communications department to ensure proper press coverage and visibility for secured events.
- Work with communications department and convention services department in assisting organizations in suggesting area tours, entertainment, attractions and PR opportunities.

- Create and manage Local Organizing Committees when appropriate for large sporting events. Prepare agenda's to keep projects on a time line and on budget.
- Coordinate travel schedules and participate in appropriate trade shows as described in marketing plan.
- Preparation and dissemination of external reports to area hotels.
- Assist in organization, coordination and participation of sales blitzes, familiarization tours and work closely with committees.
- Assist in providing information for the preparation of the annual budget and marketing plan preparation, etc.
- File written reports of trips. Prepare other reports as required, including expense accounts, monthly reports, annual market actions plans, etc.
- Maintain good working relationships with the Area University, College Athletic department staff, operations managers of area athletic venues, local sports and community organizations and Facility Managers.
- Achieve and/or exceed sales goals for leads, definites and hotel room nights as outlined by the Vice President of Sales and Services.
- Oversee activities of the Sports Services Manager as necessary.
- Public Relations to brand Sports Commission Locally & Nationally.
- Perform all other duties as required or requested.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

P. Harvey
01/10

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Director of Sports Sales

STATUS: Full-time (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: V.P. of Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and Services

SUMMARY:

Responsible for sales and marketing activities that promote the area to event planners for their competition, special events, trade shows, and conferences.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Solicit by phone, letter, direct mail and personal sales calls within assigned markets: National Governing Bodies, Amateur Sports disciplines and rights holders who have the potential to bring events to Buffalo.
- Prepare comprehensive bid proposals as required. This will include but is not limited to collecting hotel room block information from hotel and motels outlining availability and rates for hotel rooms and competition sites, in addition to any other pertinent material required in RFP.
- Assist in the development of marketing brochures and other collateral material to be used in the overall sales effort.
- Maintain an effective filing system to allow for orderly contact and follow up to potential event planners that would consider the Buffalo/Niagara area as a host to their event. Maintain assigned computer files, as well as the creation of new files through new business development.
- Make personal bid presentations to sporting/special event organizations as required.
- Help supervise the coordination of housing of attendees and registration services if needed.
- Work closely with the communications department to ensure proper press coverage and visibility for secured events.
- Work with communications department and convention services department in assisting organizations in suggesting area tours, entertainment, attractions and PR opportunities.

- Create and manage Local Organizing Committees when appropriate for large sporting events. Prepare agenda's to keep projects on a time line and on budget.
- Coordinate travel schedules and participate in appropriate trade shows as described in marketing plan.
- Preparation and dissemination of external reports to area hotels.
- Assist in organization, coordination and participation of sales blitzes, familiarization tours and work closely with committees.
- Assist in providing information for the preparation of the annual budget and marketing plan preparation, etc.
- File written reports of trips. Prepare other reports as required, including expense accounts, monthly reports, annual market actions plans, etc.
- Maintain good working relationships with the Area University and College athletic department staff and operations managers of area athletic venues.
- Achieve and/or exceed sales goals for leads, definites and room nights as outlined by the Director of Sales and Services.
- Oversee activities of Operations Assistant as necessary.
- Perform all other duties as required or requested.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

C. Giglia
01/10

**BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
JOB DESCRIPTION**

POSITION: National Sales Manager

STATUS: Full-time (**Exempt Position**)

REPORTS TO: V.P. of Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and Services

SUMMARY: Promotes and sells Buffalo as a convention and meeting destination for associations; achieves specific room night sales goals as assigned and reviewed annually.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Solicit by phone, letter, e-mail, direct mail, and personal sales calls within assigned markets: National Associations, Biomedical Sciences, Local University Market, Medical groups with a particular focus on the local medical community: hospitals, medical products, manufacturers, and HMO's.
- Assist in the development of invitational brochures, and other collateral material to be used in the overall sales effort.
- Maintain an effective computer system designed to allow for orderly, automatic contact and follow-up of potential groups that might meet in the Greater Buffalo area. Review of assigned computer files, as well as the creation of new business. This includes contact with local members of associations through the Buffalo Ambassador program, Universities and Hospitals.
- Make personal bid presentations to associations/conventions meeting in other cities as required.
- Collect group information from hotels and motels on the availability and rates for guest rooms, meeting rooms, and restaurant facilities in addition to any other pertinent material in preparing proposals for future conventions.
- Work with communications department and convention services department in assisting organizations in suggesting area tours, entertainment, newspaper, radio and television publicity prior to and while they are in Buffalo.

- Participate in appropriate out-of-town trade shows as assigned and coordinate travel schedules with industry partners.
- Assist in organization, coordination and participation of sales blitzes, familiarization tours and work closely with committees.
- Assist in providing information for the preparation of the annual budget and marketing plan.
- Prepare written reports of trips. Prepare other reports as required, including monthly reports, annual market action plans, etc.
- Make sales trips to the DC Capital area to personally call on association headquarters, as defined in the marketing plan.
- Make weekly outside sales calls as necessary.
- Perform other related duties as required or requested.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

Rev 01/10
L. White

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Director of Tourism Sales

STATUS: Full-time (**Exempt Position**)

REPORTS TO: V.P. of Convention Sales and Services

SUMMARY: Responsible for generating business from the group market including tour operators, travel agents, AAA offices, and any other markets that may be related. Assist with development and implementation of overall sales and marketing programs and promoting the Tourism industry in Buffalo, Erie County and Greater Niagara as a travel destination.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Market the destination with an emphasis on overnight visitation to Buffalo and Erie County, as well as the sites and attractions throughout the Greater Niagara Region.
- Solicit Motorcoach Operators, Tour Operators, and Group Travel Planners to include Buffalo, Erie County & Greater Niagara in travel itineraries and packages. Meet and achieve annual sales goals.
- Assist in development of travel brochures, e-newsletters, sample itineraries, packages and other promotional materials to be used in overall tourism sales and marketing.
- Generate group tour sales leads and definite bookings. Maintain effective tracking system designed to allow effective contact follow-up. Maintain weekly performance reports.
- Maintain close working relationships with the Buffalo & Erie County hotels, attractions and cultural community. Assist in the development of travel packages and collateral for this market segment.
- Assist in the development of the group tour sales advertising program.
- Work with and maintain relationship with public officials and private sector organizations to keep aware of legislative matters and to assist in increasing funding for tourism-related programs.
- Make sales calls on Tour Operators, AAA's & CAA's to promote Buffalo and Erie County as a destination. Create leads and 12 RD's for follow up for future sales.

- Work closely with V.P. of Marketing to ensure proper press coverage and visibility of tourism news and programs.
- Assist with onsite marketing such as familiarization tours, site inspections and group tour leader programs.
- Attend regularly scheduled Tourism Marketing Meetings, coordinate subcommittees and direct as needed.
- Assist in development of annual Marketing Plan and Budget.
- Attend travel trade shows, sales blitzes and other sales and marketing programs as needed. Perform timely trip reports and direct follow-up as required.
- Act as project director the New York State Matching Funds program, coordinate Matching Funds program for Erie County and also the Greater Niagara Region.
- Work closely with WNY Tourism Promotion Agencies and Southern Ontario Agencies to promote tourism on a regional basis.
- Perform other related duties as required or requested by the V.P. of Sales.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

L. Mueller
Rev 01/10

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Multicultural Sales Manager

STATUS: Full-time (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: V.P. of Convention Sales, Amateur Sports, Special Events and Services

SUMMARY:

Responsible for sales and marketing activities that promote the area to meeting planners for their conventions, trade shows, conferences. Usually handles smaller meetings.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Generates hotel bookings from the Religious, Ethnic/Minority and African American market segments.
- Solicits and coordinates hotel and convention center cost projections and organizes facilities packages for meeting planner's consideration.
- Makes personal and telephone sales contacts to meeting planners in the Religious, Ethnic/Minority and African American market segments.
- Assists in planning and coordination of sales programs that will showcase the area as a convenient and economical meeting location.
- Plans and coordinates direct sales calls, sales blitzes, familiarization tours, site inspections and trade marketplaces as assigned.
- Keeps accurate and up to date files on all groups that have or may utilize area's meeting facilities.
- Provides monthly sales information to V.P. of Convention Sales for inclusion in departments various sales activity reports.
- Prepares written reports that coincide with annual market actions such as: sales trips, tradeshow results, expense reports, etc.

- Assist in the preparation of the annual budget and marketing plan.
- Perform all other duties as required or requested.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

D. Williamson
01/10

**BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION**

POSITION: Sports Services Manager
Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission

STATUS: Full-time (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: Director of Sports Development
Vice President of Sales and Services

SUMMARY:

Assist with administration of all sports special programs and events for the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission. Provide sales assistance and support to Sports sales managers.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Work in conjunction with Sales, Marketing, Finance and Communications staff to meet and exceed goals and objectives set forth through the annual marketing plan.
- Serve as liaison between Rights Holders, clients, locals organizing committees and the Sports Commission
- Assess the facility needs of clients and work with local venues.
 - Find facilities for events
- Research and qualify new events as required
 - research event history; operating budget, host city fees, subsidies, hotel room pickup, number of participants, attendees etc.
- Preparation of hotel related communications. This includes working with the Simpleview program to manage leads, definite bookings and lost business report
- Collect and coordinate appropriate material and insure accuracy of amateur athletic bid book documents, which could include proposals, contracts for transportation, attractions, venue requirements and political support letters, etc.
- Solicit the following event categories by phone, email, letter, direct mail and personal sales calls to the National Governing Bodies and rights holders who have the potential to bring events to Buffalo.
 - Table tennis
 - Fencing
 - Darts
 - Curling
 - Sports Meetings
 - Dragon Boat
 - NJCAA Events
 - Triathlon
 - Themed Runs/Mud Runs
 - Orienteering
 - Additional Niche Events

- Produce and maintain sales goals for events within the following categories:
 - Leads 2 per month
 - Definites 1 per month
 - Room Nights 1,200 per year

(Goals will be evaluated and revised annually and monitored regularly)

- Update and maintain database of event planners.
- Manage the Sports Services Program
 - Welcome desks
 - Signage
 - Visitor readiness
- Provide appropriate level of services to all upcoming sports events and meetings
- Maintain continuing communication with sports clients regarding their needs for events
- When necessary participate in the creation of sponsor opportunities and the fulfillment of sponsor packages
- Update, plan, implement and maintain accuracy and content of the sport website, including online facility guide
- Assist in the management of the relationship between of the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission staff and Advisory Council.
- Recruit, develop and train volunteers as needed for special events.
- Supervise volunteers during actual event dates when appropriate.
- Recruit and coordinate the Sports Internship Program
- Assist in Managing the continued growth of the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission brand.
- Coordinate press opportunities with Visit Buffalo Niagara’s communications department.
- Write, design and coordinate quarterly sports e-newsletter.
- Provide backup support to convention sales/service departments when necessary.
- Assist in organization, coordination and participation of sales blitzes, familiarization tours.
- Manage and implement the Empire State Games Legacy Scholarship Program.
- Assist in coordination of annual marketing plan and budget.
- Greet visitors to our office and cover for reception desk when needed.
- Complete all other duties and responsibilities as required or requested.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Convention Services Manager
STATUS: Full-Time (*Non-Exempt Position*)
REPORTS TO: Vice President of Convention Sales and Services

SUMMARY:

Responsible for organizing and directing all services programs needed in servicing a convention or tradeshow. Works with CVB Sales personnel and meeting planners to determine servicing requirements and other support needed by the organization or attendees to ensure a successful event/convention.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Management of Concierge Program.
- Manage CVB Housing Bureau to include: obtaining block and rates from hotels, setting up computer and maintaining inventory, meet with meeting planners as needed to identify specific needs and tailor reservation forms, give final approval to housing forms, assist with set up of on-line housing, manage room blocks, set up specialized blocks, process all housing requests, send individual acknowledgments of reservations, deliver reservations to hotels, manage inquiries, changes and cancellations, speak with meeting planners on regular basis.
- Service Conventions with 500 or less peak rooms.
- Communicate with hotel reservations management, front office management and all sales staff regarding room block adjustments to ensure a successful housing process.
- Produce weekly housing reports and distribute as appropriate.
- Update Convention Calendar.
- Maintain an inventory of literature and services collateral, such as convention service request forms, facility guides, restaurant guides, meeting planner check list, name tags and conventions bags.
- Coordinate client orders for services provided such as, visitor guides, area maps, restaurant guides, area attractions and transportation providers, meet with client as needed.
- Attend trade shows for group attendance building.

- Coordinate and process bulk internet requests for Convention and Visitors Bureau Sales Managers as well as requests by hotels.
- Maintain database for statistical evaluation to include: number of conventions by date, market segment, attendance, room night and economic impact.
- Follow up on hotel room pick up information after a Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau's group checks out to keep accurate accounting of group performance.
- Request history from past meeting sites around the country to be included in Convention and Visitors Bureau leads.
- Coordinate all aspects of all tradeshow, registration, hotel, airline and car rental, booth shipping and set-up, utilities, signage, decorating, pre and post mailing labels, give-aways, material packing and shipping, invoicing and check-requests.
- Assist Sales Managers in the absence of their Administrative Assistant. Take weekly shift on switchboard.
- Build databases of restaurants, attractions and venues for coupon program and request for special discount consideration for Buffalo Ambassador and Concierge Program.
- Perform all other duties as required or requested.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

K. Cox
01/10

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Convention Services Manager

STATUS: Full-Time (*Non-Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: Vice President of Convention Sales and Services

SUMMARY:

Responsible for organizing and directing all services programs needed in servicing a convention or tradeshow. Works with CVB Sales personnel and meeting planners to determine servicing requirements and other support needed by the organization or attendees to ensure a successful event/convention.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Management of Concierge Program.
- Manage CVB Housing Bureau to include: obtaining block and rates from hotels, setting up computer and maintaining inventory, meet with meeting planners as needed to identify specific needs and tailor reservation forms, give final approval to housing forms, assist with set up of on-line housing, manage room blocks, set up specialized blocks, process all housing requests, send individual acknowledgments of reservations, deliver reservations to hotels, manage inquiries, changes and cancellations, speak with meeting planners on regular basis.
- Service Conventions with 500 or less peak rooms.
- Communicate with hotel reservations management, front office management and all sales staff regarding room block adjustments to ensure a successful housing process.
- Produce weekly housing reports and distribute as appropriate.
- Update Convention Calendar.
- Maintain an inventory of literature and services collateral, such as convention service request forms, facility guides, restaurant guides, meeting planner check list, name tags and conventions bags.
- Coordinate client orders for services provided such as, visitor guides, area maps, restaurant guides, area attractions and transportation providers, meet with client as needed.
- Attend trade shows for group attendance building.

- Coordinate and process bulk internet requests for Convention and Visitors Bureau Sales Managers as well as requests by hotels.
- Maintain database for statistical evaluation to include: number of conventions by date, market segment, attendance, room night and economic impact.
- Follow up on hotel room pick up information after a Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau's group checks out to keep accurate accounting of group performance.
- Request history from past meeting sites around the country to be included in Convention and Visitors Bureau leads.
- Coordinate all aspects of all tradeshow, registration, hotel, airline and car rental, booth shipping and set-up, utilities, signage, decorating, pre and post mailing labels, give-aways, material packing and shipping, invoicing and check-requests.
- Assist Sales Managers in the absence of their Administrative Assistant. Take weekly shift on switchboard.
- Build databases of restaurants, attractions and venues for coupon program and request for special discount consideration for Buffalo Ambassador and Concierge Program.
- Perform all other duties as required or requested.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

T. Martell
01/12

Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau

JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Sales and Marketing Assistant/Database Coordinator

STATUS: Full-time (Non-Exempt Position)

REPORTS TO: Director of Administration

SUMMARY: Responsible for administrative and clerical support for the convention sales and marketing department and database coordinator for the organization.

Administrative Responsibilities:

Administrative duties for the sales and marketing departments, which includes:

Provide assistance to sales team with regards to sales leads by creating support letters, follow up with hotels for proposals and subsidy forms, and create bid books.

Work with convention services team when business turns definite – assign CS managers to business, handle traces, prepare CS letter and services folder.

Assist sales team with tradeshow registration, preparation and follow up.

Assist with reception, site inspection and sales mission preparation and follow up.

Review monthly lead/definite report and advise VP of any errors.

Take minutes at departmental committee meetings.

Assist with backyard marketing campaign.

Assist with media tracking in CRM.

Forward on-line RFP's to appropriate sales manager.

Assist with scheduling departmental meetings.

Other duties and responsibilities as required.

Database Responsibilities:

Identify needs of users and troubleshoot system errors and work to resolve. Communicate unresolved items to CRM and CMS vendor through ticket system. Monitor progress of tickets to resolution.

Review and monitor monthly time usage reports from CRM and CMS vendor. Advise management on usage and maintenance contract renewal needs.

Assist and train staff on building searches and reports.

Set up new users as required and control access permissions and privileges.

Add new accounts, contacts and listings via requests from partners and staff. Update contact information as required.

Assist and advise partners on extranet utilization and access.

Review and approve/deny partner listing submissions.

Participate in monthly calls with database vendor (SEO, CRM, CMS).

Provide additional training to staff as needed.

Other duties and responsibilities as required.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

D. Pappas
7/13

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Vice President of Marketing

STATUS: Full-time (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: President/CEO

SUMMARY:

The Vice President of Marketing is responsible for the formulation and implementation of programs and practices designed to foster an efficient and effective public relations and communications operation to promote the CVB's mission. The position shall function as an advisor to the CVB president, management team and staff on issues involving public relations, media relations, marketing, advertising, crisis communications, print and electronic media issues and promotions. The Vice President of Marketing will be responsible for supervising the Bureau's branding message, image and public relations campaigns, graphic standards, related communications functions and managing the staff assigned to the marketing department, as well as agencies on retainer.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Development of annual CVB marketing plan for public relations, graphics and communications activities which position the Bureau as Buffalo Niagara's tourism and convention marketing agency.
- Development of marketing department's budget to support the marketing plan.
- Development and coordination of media relations program for CVB. Personal contact and relationship development with local media representatives to enhance CVB's position within local media community.
- Responsible for hiring, directing and supervising graphic artist/creative services manager, marketing manager, online content manager, communications manager and administrative positions.
- Assist president in the dissemination of information and publicity for public affairs issues impacting the hospitality industry, speech/letter writing.
- Coordinate and supervise production of CVB multi-media projects, including CVB promotional videos, power point presentations, commercials and PSA's.
- Supervise maintenance of an active and updated media list on local, regional and national publications and outlets.

- Responsible for overseeing coordination of CVB press conferences.
- Responsible for development and maintenance of CVB web sites.
- Responsible for production of new electronic media, including Blogs, Flash Videos, and Podcasts.
- Oversee creation of sales and marketing materials, including consumer and trade advertisements.
- Responsible for implementation of cultural tourism marketing initiatives. Serve as staff liaison to Board level Cultural Tourism Committee.
- Coordinate development and release of information specifically targeted to various media outlets; develops materials and writes articles in a continuing effort to obtain maximum media coverage, such as press kits, guidebooks, newspapers and magazines.
- Responsible for coordinating efforts between creative vendors (e.g. ad agency, public relations firm, web developers) and Bureau.
- Oversee development of advertising schedule and placements for Bureau.
- Supervision of tracking system for CVB publicity, promotions and media campaigns.
- Supervise production of CVB support materials, which may include ads, graphics, multi-media presentations, marketing campaigns and promotional/sales efforts; researches and writes promotional literature provided to convention attendees, tourists and media.
- Responsible for BNCVB Foundation development initiatives, including grant writing. Serve as staff liaison to local foundations.
- Serve as a staff liaison to assigned CVB committees. Serve as a public relations advisor to CVB's Board of Directors.
- Oversee production of annual report and electronic and print newsletters.
- Provides information assistance and services to travel writers, convention writers, food writers and other media; coordinates press trips and familiarization (FAM) tours.
- Other duties and responsibilities as assigned by the CVB president.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

Rev 01/10
E. Healy

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Director of Creative Services Manager

STATUS: Full-time (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: Vice President of Marketing.

SUMMARY:

The Director of Creative Services Manager is responsible for the overall design, or development, management and production of all CVB publications and marketing collateral. Working within the framework of the Marketing Department, the Director of Creative Services shall function as an adviser to the staff on Bureau publications, print materials, web sites and other media involving graphic design.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Manages the development and production of all CVB publications and printed material, including the Visitor's Guide, Group Tour Planner, Destination Planning Guide, Restaurant guide/maps, sales publications and special event materials, marketing brochures and special interest print publications developed and issued by the CVB.
- Responsible for the design, layout, creative, copy, pre-press and print supervision of all Bureau publications.
- Development of related publications budget items for department's, Bureau's marketing plan and Annual Business Review.
- Coordinates the development and continual maintenance (with the Information Technology Manager) of all CVB's Websites, e-mail campaigns and newsletters and other online media.
- Coordinates the creation and deployment of audio and video assets.

- Working within the Marketing Department, creates, develops and designs advertising campaigns and public relations print campaigns.
- Collects catalogs and negotiates terms for use of photography to be used for media relations purposes, advertising and websites; hires photographers, illustrators and other creative service vendors; produces photo shoots; takes photographs.
- Development and production of support materials necessary for CVB presentations, promotions, proposals, board meetings, sales and marketing efforts, industry events, etc.
- Obtain price quotes for printing and creative services projects.
- Supervision of tracking systems as it relates to research necessary for completion of publication projects.
- Oversees the work of the Graphic Designer.
- Other duties and responsibilities assigned.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

Rev 01/10
M. Steinberg

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Director of Marketing

STATUS: Full-time; (*Exempt Position*)

REPORTS TO: Vice President of Marketing

SUMMARY:

Assists Vice President of Marketing in developing and implementing consumer marketing initiatives. Promotes leisure travel by developing travel packages, special promotions and contests. Manages email marketing campaigns, social networking and viral marketing strategies designed to engage customers in ongoing conversations. Conducts routine customer surveys and zip code analysis. Serves as liaison for both traditional and non-traditional partners in order to expand and enhance promotional efforts.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Assist with overall marketing for the Buffalo Niagara area as a travel destination with an emphasis on overnight visitation.
- Maintain a close working relationship with Buffalo & Erie County hotel, attractions, cultural community and other hospitality-related businesses. Provide them with regular updates on marketing initiatives.
- Provides current tourism partners and community partners with up-to-date and accurate information about CVB projects. Arrange and host quarterly industry meeting.
- Researches, writes and distributes e-newsletters. Maintains production schedule, develops editorial topics, coordinates contests and special promotions, analyzes click through and open rates, tests subject lines. Responsible for subscription growth.
- Responsible for implementation of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and other emerging viral technologies.
- Manages, creates and monitors content for CVB blog.
- Oversees development of content for mobile devices and smart phones.
- Conducts ongoing consumer marketing research via web-based and email surveys. Analyzes zip code data in conjunction with the Visitor Center Manager.
- Assists with coordination of familiarization tours, site visits, press trips and other related marketing initiatives and programs.

- Annual update, solicitation of ads and completion of the Destination Planning Guide and Map Pad.
- Creates new seasonal promotional packages, and other contests and promotions as needed.
- Work with local colleges/universities on recruiting interns and subsequently managing the intern.
- Develops business relationships with travel, hotel, restaurant, and retail partners to facilitate effective consumer promotions and contests.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

01/10
K. Fashana

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Communications Manager
STATUS: Full-time (**Exempt Position**)
REPORTS TO: Vice President of Marketing

SUMMARY:

Responsible for public relations support focusing on media relationships, newsletters and news releases. Also assists V.P. of Marketing and Graphic Artist/Creative Services Director with Bureau projects, promotions and communications efforts as assigned.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Responsible for the research, writing and editing of VBN visitors guide, newsletters and annual report. Also responsible for coordinating production schedules, design and printing with Creative Services Director.
- Develops news releases and public relations materials which promote the VBN's activities, upcoming conventions, tourism programs/campaigns, cultural tourism initiatives and other newsworthy activities.
- Assists with prospecting opportunities for local and regional travel features, and positive media coverage.
- Oversees writing, editing and proofing of all VBN print materials and marketing collateral and coordinates approval and sign-off of all materials prior to publication.
- Oversees writing, editing and proofing of all VBN websites and blogs.
- Manages all social media efforts of VBN
- Plans and coordinates media familiarization tours.
- Plans and implements media events and press conferences.
- Coordinates and oversees research, data collection, editing and other duties related to various collateral materials (e.g. Visitors Guide) and projects as assigned.
- Assists with planning and coordinating VBN special events.
- Tracks, measures and values earned media; maintains copies of articles; archives articles.
- Other duties as assigned.

Personal and Organizational Development:

- Sets priorities and manages workflow to ensure efficient, timely and accurate processing of assigned work.
- Keeps abreast of current travel and tourism industry trends.
- Keeps abreast of current marketing communications, advertising and social media trends.
- Maintains a cordial and effective relationship with co-workers, clients, community officials and other business contacts.
- Interacts with people at all levels effectively by utilizing good communications skills, cooperating purposefully and providing information and guidance, as needed, to achieve the mission of the organization.

Knowledge, Education, Skills, and Abilities:

- Degree in communications, public relations or related field of study.
- Experience in news and feature writing and management of people desirable.
- Ability to communicate orally and in writing with others, to explain complex issues, to receive and interpret complex information and to respond appropriately.
- Ability to understand written and oral communications and interpret abstract information.
- Ability to carry out complex tasks with many concrete and abstract variables.
- Ability to utilize computer programs and understand functionality.
- Ability to drive own vehicle, attend external meetings and functions.

Employee Signature

Department Head Signature

**BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
JOB DESCRIPTION**

POSITION: Director, Industry Relations & Destination Development

STATUS: Full-time (Exempt Position)

REPORTS TO: President and CEO

Summary:

The Industry Relations & Destination Development Director engages citizens, tourism and hospitality professionals through various programs in an effort to grow the impact of tourism in the WNY region. The director's primary responsibility is to work with those who desire to advance the future of tourism and place them, through education and continual communication, in the appropriate role to do so. The director develops and helps conduct various activities and events, as well as handle member's questions and resolves problems.

The Industry Relations & Destination Development Director is also responsible for expanding the visibility and promotion of visitor services programs.

Duties:

- Cultivate relationships with appropriate visitor and community/regional organizations to develop collaboration, partnerships and other opportunities.
- Oversee the maintenance of member/partner and volunteer databases and manage the communication pathways for all segments, including email newsletters, and training events etc.
- Maintain up-to-date information on the corporate website, which is available to all members and partners.
- Recruit members, triage interest for appropriate roles, and provide customer relationship management of those members, partners and volunteers, documenting their activities in the VBN's CRM system.
- Serve as the editor of all member/partner communications, which include but shall not be limited to Tourism Insider, Travel Pulse and the 7-in-7 weekly update.
- Analyze metrics associated with the member/partner database to identify trends, and marketing opportunities.
- Coordinate the development and implementation of a Certified Tourism Ambassador program.

- Oversee development and delivery of educational opportunities such as quarterly industry meetings, FAM tours, monthly volunteer orientation sessions and a half-day summit for appropriate constituents.
- Develop and manage a series of events to celebrate National Tourism Week to include both advocacy and recognition events throughout the week in coordination with the marketing department of the CVB.
- Stay abreast of tourism issues and opportunities and to share that information where appropriate with local constituents.
- Speak at local events about the hospitality industry and tourism trends where appropriate with the end goal of recruiting Ambassadors.
- Forward Ambassador sales leads to the VP of Sales and to report on conversion of those leads to business.
- Work closely with other department heads in areas of crossover activities.
- Oversee retail sales program, including operations, personnel and merchandising to offset operating costs and promote Visit Buffalo Niagara members.
- Develop ideas for dispensing visitor information as dictated by the needs of visitors, members and special events, to include but not be limited to, off-site information booths.

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.

JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Visitor Center Manager

STATUS: Full Time (*Exempt*)

REPORTS TO: Director Industry Relations & Destination Development

Summary

The Visitor Center Manager is a full time, year-round position that is responsible for creating a sense of welcome and hospitality in the Visit Buffalo Niagara visitor center. The Visitor Center Manager will take the lead role in the supervision of staff (as well as volunteers for the Visitor Center), gift shop operations, set up for monthly volunteer orientations and attending to the needs of all visitors.

In addition to the above, the Visitor Center Manager is also responsible for making recommendations for Buffalo-themed merchandise, as well as following procedures for procuring the merchandise and maintaining proper inventory controls.

The Visitor Center Manager may be required to perform other functions as directed by the Director of Industry Relations

Duties and responsibilities:

- Maintains a well-informed, working knowledge of the attractions and services available in the area to visitors; acts as a liaison between these entities to creatively sell the destination to visitors.
- Supervise the dissemination of information designed to influence the buying decision of potential visitors; ensures that all inquiries from mail, e-mail, walk in and telephone receive prompt and courteous response.
- Oversee the dissemination of VBN materials to various outlets as identified below.
- Compile and maintain data on community events for Visit Buffalo Niagara website and weekly partner email blast.
- Display partners' information in neat and orderly manner and contact the appropriate partner to provide additional materials when necessary.
- Assist visitors with reservations, when and where applicable.
- Maintain cleanliness of visitor center.
- Directly hire and supervise staff and volunteers including training and shift scheduling.
- Work with Director to resolve visitor complaints or problems.
- Proven experience handling financial transactions.

Distribution:

- Work with Director to ensure Touring Guide and other appropriate materials are in high-traffic areas including, but not limited to attractions, hotels, cultural institutions, travel centers.
- Communicate with partners on a regular basis to ensure supplies are stocked; make recommendations for other VBN materials where appropriate.
- Periodically visit high-traffic sites to spot check how materials are being presented, verify quantities, meet with primary contact at venue (customer service call).

Inquiry Processing:

- Respond to all visitor information inquiries.
- Track fulfillment of all mail and phone inquiries and produce a monthly report from the daily visitor logs showing the total number of visitors to the outlet, state of origin, length of stay, reason for travel and final destination.

Mail Processing:

- Process outgoing mail and bulk mailings as needed.
- Provide assistance to Services Department. This includes coordinating the preparation of convention and group packets and keeping records of each request as well as and coordinating pickups for same.

Merchandise:

- Meet with vendors to select merchandise which reflects VBN brand.
- Follow appropriate policies and procedures including new vendor account paperwork, purchase orders and check requisitions for consignment merchandise. This also includes pre-approval from Delaware North on new merchandise for Airport Visitor Center.
- Handle all receiving for merchandise and manage inventory controls.
- Ensure pricing of merchandise meets VBN standards.
- Manage in-house requests for inventory.

Reporting:**Accounting**

The Visitor Center Manager reports all visitor center deposits of cash and credit card from merchandise

- Daily Z-out (sales) reports for both Brisbane and Airport Visitor Centers
- Daily credit card report for both divisions
- Provide monthly inventory, cost and sales reports

Administration

- Monthly visitor center report
- Monthly sales report
- Monthly top sellers and zip code reports

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.
JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Airport Visitor Center Manager

STATUS: Part-Time (*Non-Exempt*)

REPORTS TO: Director Industry Relations & Destination Development

Summary

The Airport Visitor Center Manager is a full time, year-round position that is responsible for creating a sense of welcome and hospitality in the Visit Buffalo Niagara visitor center, located at the airport. The Airport Visitor Center Manager will take the lead role in the supervision of staff, gift shop operations, and attending to the needs of all visitors.

The Airport Visitor Center Manager may be required to perform other functions as directed by the Director of Industry Relations

Duties and responsibilities:

- Maintains a well-informed, working knowledge of the attractions and services available in the area to visitors; acts as a liaison between these entities to creatively sell the destination to visitors.
- Supervise the dissemination of information designed to influence the buying decision of potential visitors; ensures that all inquiries from walk in and telephone receive prompt and courteous response.
- Display partners' information in neat and orderly manner and ensure supplies are maintained.
- Assist visitors with reservations, when and where applicable.
- Maintain cleanliness of visitor center, which also includes purchase of cleaning supplies (to be reimbursed).
- Directly hire and supervise staff including training and shift scheduling. This includes coordinating the NFTA application and Delaware North appropriate processes; taking necessary SIDA classes, maintaining records for badges, renewals and parking permits.
- Work with Director to resolve visitor complaints or problems.
- Proven experience handling financial transactions.

Inquiry Processing:

- Respond to all visitor information inquiries.

Merchandise:

- Handle all receiving for merchandise and manage inventory controls. Some heavy lifting required.
- Ensure pricing of merchandise meets VBN standards and coordinate reduction in pricing and/or price discrepancies to move merchandise, when needed, with downtown Visitor Center Manager.

Reporting:

Accounting

- Daily Z-out (sales) reports
- Daily credit card report
- Weekly payroll time sheets and credit card receipts
- Coordinate monthly inventory, the last day of each month, and reconcile all discrepancies
- Prepare cash deposits for service with third-party company; coordinate requests for loose change (coins)

Administration

- Monthly visitor center report, including sales, total visitors and number of sales
- Work with VBN technical support and/or vendors to update or correct system software and hardware.

4/15

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.

JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Information Specialist

STATUS: Part-time; *(Non-Exempt)*

REPORTS TO: Visitor Center Manager

SUMMARY:

Provide information and assistance to visitors at the Visitor Center and other duties as required.

DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

Visitor Center

- Welcome and provide quality and accurate information to visitors
- Be well versed and knowledgeable of current events and driving directions
- Assess visitor needs, albeit for information or merchandise, and provide assistance as required and maintain records, where applicable, in Simpleview – including any referrals to member/partners.
- Computer operation knowledge to handle transactions, navigate the Visit Buffalo Niagara website as well as familiarity with search engines to locate information when asked
- Record data on visitor traffic
- Stock racks, counters and maintain inventory of merchandise and brochures as needed
- Update and maintain online Calendar of Events on VBN website
- Handle daily cash, credit card and banking transactions
- Other duties as required by Visit Buffalo Niagara
 - Fill in for manager when necessary
- Assist with Social Media needs while the Marketing Manager is on vacation.
- Create Sales Kits for the Sales Department.
- Assist Sales Department with adding Group Tour information to Member/Partner area of the CRM.
- Assist the Marketing Department with any changes needed in the CRM.
- Assist Administration & Finance Department with mailings and other projects.
- Proof brochures for the Marketing and/or Sales Department (e.g. recently proofed ad index for Visitor Guide).
- Provide assistance at information tables for conventions, meetings, open houses, and tradeshow (have also provided leads to the Sales Department at Visit Buffalo Niagara while at these events).
- Validate Geotrail Logbooks and distribute Geotrail coins and surveys for those who successfully complete Geocaching for the Great Lakes Seaway Trail.



Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.

2016 Approved Operating Budget

Approved Friday November 6, 2015 at the BNCVB Board of Director's Meeting

Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.
2016 Operating Budget
Budget Narrative

Revenues:

- **Erie County Grant** – Pending approval of the Erie County budget, the County is proposing to increase the County Grant by 1.5% or \$ 54,500 to \$ 3,354,500 for the 2016 Budget Year.
- **Visitor Guide Advertising** – Revenues from the sale of the 2016 Touring Guide are expected to rise by approximately 5%. It is anticipated that it will be achieved through a 3.0% rate increase and a 2.0% increase in overall sales volume.
- **Convention Assessments** – In 2016 it is expected that there will be five convention groups for which a hotel subsidy will be collected. Lions, Wesleyan Church, Alpha Kappa Alpha, American Accordionists and NYS School Boards. The anticipated revenue is similar to that actually generated in 2015.
- **Shared Services – BNCC-** This represents the Center's share of shared personnel with the CVB. This includes accounting/HR, IT, Graphic Arts and Marketing related personnel. For 2016 it is expected to be slightly lesser as in 2015 there were three Union contracts which were negotiated.
- **Joint/Co-op Marketing-** Represents revenues generated from the sales of various Visit Buffalo Niagara collateral pieces and marketing related programming. Included is the sale of advertising on the VBN Map pad and co-sponsorships of various programs. In 2015 VBN received \$100,000 from NTTC for the Canadian Marketing Initiative. Due to the uncertainty of additional outside funding for the Canadian Marketing Initiative, we are budgeting for a reduction in this revenue line as illustrated.
- **Joint/Co-op Sales-** Represents shared costs billed to industry partners for attendance at various Convention Sales and Sports market related tradeshow, receptions and sales calls. Decrease is related to the removal of the Industry Relations Department activity from the Convention Sales and Services department.

Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.
2016 Operating Budget
Budget Narrative

- **Merchandising Buffalo Visitor Center and Airport Visitor Center** – Based on projections and traffic count at both the visitor center at the Buffalo Niagara Airport and the Downtown Visitor Center the 2016 budget reflects a 20% decrease in Merchandise Revenues at the Airport Visitor Center and a 20% increase in sales at the Buffalo Visitor Center located in the Brisbane Building.

Expenses:

- **Personnel Costs** – For 2016, the budget reflects a 2.5% increase for staff which is reflected in the salaries line. This entire increase will be incorporated into the organization's incentive program that was implemented in January 2015. This coupled with the addition of a new Marketing Staff Person, accounts for the 3.23% increase in personnel costs. For 2016, it is expected that various benefit related premiums will increase. That along with the additional new staff costs will increase this line item by approximately 7%
- **Professional Development - Staff** – Training expenses are expected to increase in 2016. Additional training costs were incurred for Convention Sales staff's participation at the DMAI Certified Destination Management Executive and CMP Programs as well as attendance at ESTO for sales and marketing staff. In 2016, the Bureau will continue to have staff attend ESTO, DMAI, and various convention, sports and marketing related training and development programs. Additionally, Convention Services staff will be attending the ACOM services training, Meeting Max software training.
- **Advertising** – Decrease attributed to reduction in amounts associated with the Canadian Marketing Initiative. In 2016, VBN will once again apply to the State of New York for a NYS CFA Grant and sponsorship monies from the NTTCC to assist in the funding of the 2016 Canadian Marketing Initiative. Since at the time of this budget preparation it was uncertain whether this funding would be available again in 2016, both the additional revenues and expenses for the program have not been included in this budget.
- **Convention Commitments** – For 2016, an increase in the level of financial commitments for Convention and Sports Groups is expected. It will be required to secure various convention and sporting groups as in 2015. For 2016 there are additional groups requiring a subsidy resulting in the increase over 2015 projections.

Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.
2016 Operating Budget
Budget Narrative

- **Tradeshows** – Overall costs associated with attendance at tradeshows will be consistent with 2015. This is a result of similar number of shows being attended; however mix of shows is continually being monitored and revised based on projected show value to our destination.
- **Printing** – For 2016, the usual recurring print jobs will continue. Printing costs for the Map Pads, Destination Guide, Restaurant Guides, etc. will be consistent with 2015. Projected small reduction in expense is related to Canadian Marketing Initiative as mentioned previously.
- **Sales Bids & Promotions** – Includes travel and related expenses required to bid on convention and meeting related leads. It also includes the cost of site inspections as well as costs associated with the Bring it Home and Backyard Marketing Programs which are new for 2016. It also includes the continuation of the Convention Advisory Council.
- **Albany Sales Office** – For 2016, The CVB will continue to have an office in the Albany area. It is expected that as a result of the heightened presence this gives Buffalo in the Albany marketplace it continues to be a good use of resources.
- **Receptions** – VBN will be hosting/sponsoring a variety of industry receptions including the NYC receptive Operators Reception, a DC Client reception in late summer and a Marketing Sponsored media reception.
- **Research** – Costs are for the annual maintenance and upgrade of the Tourism economics Impact Calculator, Smith Travel Research and various marketing related research being generated for the consumer market. In 2015 additional research costs were incurred related to the Visitor Profile Research prepared by the firm of Bensley Young.
- **Digital/CRM/Hosting** – This line item includes the usual website monthly hosting and updating fees as well as the ongoing cost and maintenance of the CRM/CSM sales and marketing software.
- **FAM Tours** – In 2016, the convention sales department will be hosting an All Market FAM and along with I love NY host an International Operators FAM Tour in May 2016. The Marketing Department will continue to host various travel writers and media personnel throughout the year as the opportunity arises accounting for the remainder of this line item.

Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.
2016 Operating Budget
Budget Narrative

- **Public Media Relations** – In 2016, the Marketing Department will be engaging a third party Public Relations firm to provide PR services since their role will be redefined it is expected that costs associated with this engagement should be lesser than previously incurred.
- **Airport Visitor Center Operations** – This line represents the operational costs of the Airport Visitor Center. This also includes the cost of merchandise that will be sold at the Visitor Center. For 2016 VBN is budgeting for an approximate 20% decrease over 2015 amounts. This is a result of lesser traffic through the airport coupled with the decline in the value of the Canadian Dollar.
- **Industry Relations** – The program will be enhanced and slightly reconfigured in 2016. It will continue to provide emphasis on Visitor readiness training and community education and outreach. 2016 will again see an enhanced and expanded Beacon Awards Program as well as an industry Educational Summit and Industry Partner Training Program.
- **Film/Video Productions** – Continuation of the creation of various spotlight videos showcasing many of Buffalo and the Region's premier attractions, events and things to do.

BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.

**SUMMARY OF REVENUES and EXPENSES
OPERATING BUDGET
2016**

	Budget 2016	Projected 2015	Budget 2015	Actual 2014	2016-2015 Budget \$ Variance	2016-2015 Budget % Variance	2016-2015 Projected \$ Variance	2016-2015 Projected % Variance
Revenues	\$ 4,070,750	\$ 4,365,622	\$ 4,011,133	\$ 4,433,785	\$ 59,617	1.49%	\$ (294,872)	-6.75%
<u>Expenses:</u>								
Sales & Services Department Expenses	\$ 1,581,900	\$ 1,484,000	\$ 1,487,463	\$ 1,503,462	\$ 94,437	6.35%	\$ 97,900	6.60%
Marketing Department Expenses	1,186,250	1,630,991	1,248,400	2,043,390	(62,150)	-4.98%	(444,741)	-27.27%
Industry Relations	184,500	188,211	187,845	-	(3,345)	-1.78%	(3,711)	-1.97%
Airport Visitor Center	205,735	220,062	271,225	245,438	(65,490)	-24.15%	(14,327)	-6.51%
Buffalo Visitor Center	102,560	102,289	94,188	81,675	8,372	8.89%	271	0.26%
Administrative & Finance Department Expenses	809,805	740,068	722,012	848,752	87,793	12.16%	69,737	9.42%
Subtotal expenses	\$ 4,070,750	\$ 4,365,622	\$ 4,011,133	\$ 4,722,717	\$ 59,617	1.49%	\$ (294,872)	-6.75%

NET EXCESS OF REVENUES

OVER EXPENSES

\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (288,932)	\$ -	\$ -	N/A	\$ -	N/A
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Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.
 Operating Budget
 Revenues
 2016

	Budget 2016	Projected 2015	Budget 2015	Actual 2014	2016-2015 Budget \$ Variance	2016-2015 Budget % Variance	2016-2015 Projected \$ Variance	2016-2015 Projected % Variance
Erie County Grant	\$ 3,354,500	\$ 3,300,000	\$ 3,233,283	\$ 3,233,283	\$ 121,217	3.75%	\$ 54,500	1.65%
Visitor Guide Advertising	258,000	245,719	245,000	229,079	13,000	5.31%	12,281	5.00%
Assessments - Convention	26,950	34,037	5,000	52,569	21,950	439.00%	(7,087)	-20.82%
Shared Services - BNCC	6,000	9,317	12,000	8,242	(6,000)	-50.00%	(3,317)	-35.60%
NYS Matching Funds Program	55,000	54,547	55,100	54,912	(100)	-0.18%	453	0.83%
Joint Co-op - Industry Relations	25,000	24,315	26,200	-	(1,200)	-4.58%	685	2.82%
Joint/Co-op - Marketing	40,600	138,066	70,000	143,737	(29,400)	-42.00%	(97,466)	-70.59%
Joint/Co-op - Sales	73,000	80,438	83,300	84,206	(10,300)	-12.36%	(7,438)	-9.25%
Grant Revenues	-	250,000	-	367,000	-	-	(250,000)	-100.00%
Joint/Co-Op - Airport	3,500	2,950	6,500	4,120	(3,000)	-46.15%	550	18.64%
Merchandising Revenues - Brisbane Visitors Center	24,000	21,972	20,000	19,414	4,000	20.00%	2,028	9.23%
Merchandising Revenues - Airport Visitors Center	200,000	197,510	250,000	224,218	(50,000)	-20.00%	2,490	1.26%
Merchandising Revenues - Conventions	500	-	500	-	-	0.00%	500	0.00%
Interest Income	200	165	750	419	(550)	-73.33%	35	21.21%
Miscellaneous Income	3,500	6,586	3,500	12,586	-	0.00%	(3,086)	-46.86%
Total Revenues	\$4,070,750	\$4,365,622	\$ 4,011,133	\$4,433,785	\$ 59,617	1.49%	\$ (294,872)	-6.75%

Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.

Operating Budget

Total Expenses

2016

	Budget 2016	Projected 2015	Budget 2015	Actual 2014	2016-2015 Budget \$ Variance	2016-2015 Budget % Variance	2016-2015 Projected \$ Variance	2016-2015 Projected % Variance
<u>Personnel Costs:</u>								
Salaries	\$ 1,612,310	\$ 1,558,950	\$ 1,562,500	\$ 1,551,114	\$ 49,810	3.19%	\$ 53,360	3.42%
Payroll Taxes & Fringe Benefits	319,375	298,956	300,483	273,099	18,892	6.29%	20,419	6.83%
Professional Development - Staff	45,500	30,095	37,400	37,526	8,100	21.66%	15,405	51.19%
Total Personnel Costs	\$ 1,977,185	\$ 1,888,001	\$ 1,900,383	\$ 1,861,739	\$ 76,802	4.04%	\$ 89,184	4.72%
<u>Sales & Marketing Expenditures:</u>								
Advertising	\$ 415,000	\$ 804,594	\$ 385,000	\$ 917,470	\$ 30,000	7.79%	\$ (389,594)	-48.42%
Convention Commitments	202,750	148,264	160,275	189,564	42,475	26.50%	54,486	36.75%
Visitor Guide	232,000	221,636	220,000	222,851	12,000	5.45%	10,364	4.68%
Tradeshows	132,500	134,090	144,000	135,652	(11,500)	-7.99%	(1,590)	-1.19%
Printing	21,000	23,667	31,500	73,783	(10,500)	-33.33%	(2,667)	-11.27%
Office	10,900	10,228	11,250	34,284	(350)	-3.11%	672	6.57%
Sales Bids & Promotions	90,850	93,926	101,500	70,218	(10,650)	-10.49%	(3,076)	-3.27%
Convention Sales & Services	21,000	28,161	25,100	10,572	(4,100)	-16.33%	(7,161)	-25.43%

Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.

Operating Budget

Total Expenses

2016

	Budget 2016	Projected 2015	Budget 2015	Actual 2014	2016-2015 Budget \$ Variance	2016-2015 Budget % Variance	2016-2015 Projected \$ Variance	2016-2015 Projected % Variance
Travel & Meetings	35,500	38,629	38,000	30,811	(2,500)	-6.58%	(3,129)	-8.10%
Albany Sales Office	18,000	18,240	17,750	18,495	250	1.41%	(240)	-1.32%
Receptions	37,200	31,672	37,700	16,650	(500)	-1.33%	5,528	17.45%
Research	36,000	52,741	59,000	85,942	(23,000)	-38.98%	(16,741)	-31.74%
Distribution	-	-	-	17,352	-	0.00%	-	0.00%
Digital Development/CRM Hosting	60,500	77,295	68,000	206,958	(7,500)	-11.03%	(16,795)	-21.73%
Familiarization Tours	61,100	70,657	39,000	38,172	22,100	56.67%	(9,557)	-13.53%
Public/Media Relations	40,000	51,000	65,000	53,252	(25,000)	-38.46%	(11,000)	-21.57%
Freelance Writer/Graphic Artist	15,000	14,745	17,500	15,753	(2,500)	-14.29%	255	1.73%
Regional Marketing	12,000	12,022	25,500	10,581	(13,500)	-52.94%	(22)	-0.18%
Buffalo Visitor Center Operations	34,185	35,440	29,238	19,717	4,947	16.92%	(1,255)	-3.54%
Buffalo Airport Visitor Center Operations	138,850	132,475	173,725	150,680	(34,875)	-20.07%	6,375	4.81%
Promotional Items	18,000	17,987	18,000	9,922	-	0.00%	13	0.07%
Industry Relations	85,575	95,416	92,150	29,266	(6,575)	-7.14%	(9,841)	-10.31%

Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.

Operating Budget

Total Expenses

2016

	Budget 2016	Projected 2015	Budget 2015	Actual 2014	2016-2015 Budget \$ Variance	2016-2015 Budget % Variance	2016-2015 Projected \$ Variance	2016-2015 Projected % Variance
Film/Video/Photo Productions	37,500	25,000	40,000	37,711	(2,500)	-6.25%	12,500	50.00%
Photography	17,000	30,000	15,000	40,085	2,000	13.33%	(13,000)	-43.33%
Online Media Resource	5,500	4,373	5,500	4,083	-	0.00%	1,127	25.77%
Promotional Packages	1,500	1,489	1,200	2,558	300	25.00%	11	0.74%
Newsletter	3,500	5,000	4,000	4,545	(500)	-12.50%	(1,500)	-30.00%
Total Sales & Marketing Expenditures	1,782,910	2,178,748	1,824,888	2,446,927	\$ (41,978)	-2.30%	\$ (395,837)	-18.17%
Technology & Equipment	14,150	8,282	9,350	9,438	4,800	51.34%	5,868	70.85%
Department Administrative Expenses	296,505	290,591	276,512	404,613	19,993	7.23%	5,914	2.04%
Total Expenses	\$4,070,750	\$4,365,622	\$4,011,133	\$4,722,717	\$ 59,617	1.49%	\$ (294,871)	-6.75%

2016 BUSINESS PLAN



BUFFALO AERIAL PICTURES



VisitBuffaloNiagara.com

ADOPTED BY THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
ON NOVEMBER 6, 2015
Comm. 3M-5

About Visit Buffalo Niagara

Visit Buffalo Niagara is the official and accredited destination marketing organization for Erie County, the City of Buffalo and its incorporated cities, towns and villages. As the primary programmatic arm for Buffalo Niagara's travel and tourism promotion, it leads the Buffalo Niagara tourism industry to work together to generate visitor spending by developing and implementing comprehensive destination marketing programs. It is a self-governing private not-for-profit corporation with a Board of Directors.

The 2016 Business Plan is a reflection of the continued dramatic developments taking place in our community. New hotels, events and attractions are fueling a renewed appreciation for Buffalo Niagara as a visitor destination. VBN is prepared to leverage these assets through creative and innovative messaging, programming and branding. In addition, the sales and marketing efforts we have planned for the year ahead are aligned with a 5-year strategic plan written and approved in 2014.

These are truly exciting times for Buffalo Niagara. Area visitor receipts were at an all-time annual high in 2014, with estimates totaling \$1.638 billion in tourism economic impact for Erie County—a 2.06% increase over the prior year—while also supporting 29,888 local jobs and producing visitor state and local tax revenues estimated at \$201 million. The high rate of tourism economic receipts also translated into a tax savings per Erie County household over \$530 in 2014.

In 2014, Visit Buffalo Niagara's sales team produced solid results, securing 170,447 future hotel room nights; booking 460 conventions, meetings, amateur athletic events and group tours and generating 832 sales leads. These efforts will result in \$120 million in future economic impact. VBN has also been successful in its marketing efforts generating non-local media coverage with a total media value of nearly \$1.66 million and increased the number of unique website visitors to VisitBuffaloNiagara.com to 1,497,327, an increase of 13% over 2013.

Mission Statement

Visit Buffalo Niagara sells and markets our assets and attractions to visitors outside the Buffalo Niagara region as a convention, tourism and leisure destination for the economic benefit of the community. VBN is Erie County's lead marketing organization for conventions, meetings, amateur sporting events, cultural and heritage tourism and consumer travel.

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Visit Buffalo Standing Committees

Executive Committee of the VBN Board of Directors

Audit and Finance Committee

Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission – Advisory Council

Marketing Committee

Sales and Services Committee

Destination Development / Industry Relations Committee

Marketing and Tourism Trends for Fiscal Year 2016

According to the March 2015 U.S. Travel Outlook prepared by the U.S. Travel Association (USTA): “An improving labor market and growing disposable income, coupled with solid consumer confidence and moderate inflation... have together bolstered the prospects for a more consumer-led recover in 2015” nationwide.

Also according to the January 2015 Destination Analysts’ State of the American Traveler, nearly one-third of Americans planned to increase leisure travel spending over the next 12 months...the outlook for the coming year was unquestionably bright” (as cited by USTA).

The TripAdvisor TripBarometer Global Travel Economy Report provides another view on the health of the travel sector, updated monthly. According to the March 2015 report, “two in five travelers stated they would increase their travel budget in 2015...One in four travelers will spend less in 2015 than last year. Domestic traveler budgets were expected to average \$8,700 in 2015, the same as last year...Business travel was also more optimistic in 2015” (as cited by USTA)

Based on USTA forecasts, domestic leisure travel will grow by 1.6 percent and domestic business travel will grow by 1.7 percent in 2015; combined, the total domestic person-trip volume is expected to grow 1.6 percent – a slower growth rate than forecasted in 2014. Total domestic travel spending in the U.S. will increase by 3.6 percent in 2015 (compared with to 4.0 percent forecasted in 2014).

Other U.S. Travel Association forecasts for travel nationwide are:

- Total travel expenditures in the U.S.: up 4.1 percent in 2015, up 3.5 percent in 2016....2017?
- Total international visitors to the U.S.; up 4.1 percent in 2015, up 3.9 percent in 2016....2017?
- Total domestic person-trips; up 1.8 percent in 2016...2017?
- Leisure domestic person-trips: up 1.8 percent in 2016...2017?
- Business domestic person-trips; up 1.6 percent in 2016...2017?

“According to the Hotels.com Hotel Price Index, the cost of renting a hotel room climbed in 2014 for the fifth year in a row, rising by an average of 3 percent around the world. Hotel prices in North America saw the biggest increase, jumping 5 percent from 2013” (as cited by USTA).

According to data from STR, Inc., the U.S. hotel industry experienced positive results in the three key performance metrics during 2014. “Overall, in year-over-year results, the U.S. hotel industry’s occupancy was up 3.6 percent to 64.4 percent; its average daily rate rose 4.6 percent to \$115.32; and its [RevPAR] increased 8.3 percent to \$74.28” (as cited by USTA).

Amanda Hite, president and COO of STR, Inc., noted that “average daily rate (ADR) and RevPAR for the year were the highest ever recorded by STR, and we expect more growth in 2015.” STR forecasts a 5.2 percent increase in ADR and a 6.4 percent increase in RevPAR nationwide in 2015” (as cited by USTA).

PwC recently “released an updated lodging forecast anticipating even further ADR and RevPAR growth in 2015. This solid demand momentum continuing from 2014, coupled with supply growth that is expected

to remain below the long-term average, was anticipated to set the stage for a significant increase in pricing power for hotels, supporting the outlook for a solid 7.4 percent increase in RevPAR in 2015” (as cited by USTA).

“With industry occupancy expected to reach levels not seen since 1984, more than 80 percent of RevPAR growth in 2015 was expected to come from increases in [ADR]. This is the highest contribution [ADR] had made to RevPAR growth in the current economic cycle. Based on analysis from Macroeconomic Advisers and recent demand trends, PwC expected lodging demand in 2015 to increase 2.6 percent, which combined with below long-term average supply growth of 1.5 percent, was anticipated to boost occupancy levels 65.1 percent” (as cited by USTA).

“The International Air Transport Association reported global passenger traffic demand rose 5.9 percent for the full year of 2014 compared to the full year of 2013. This 2014 performance was above the 10-year average growth rate of 5.6 percent” (as cited by USTA).

“The annual Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) forecast predicted steady air travel growth for the next 20 years despite the fact that oil prices would reach beyond \$100 per barrel by 2021...The FAA predicted air travel will grow at an average rate of 2.5 percent with one billion passengers traveling on U.S.-based carriers by 2029” (as cited by USTA).

In September 2015, M&E released the results of their annual meeting and events study indicating that 2016 will be “a seller’s market” with group size expected to increase 2 percent and cost per attendee per day to increase 4.5 percent.

M&C also states that “F&B continues to be a significant driver per-attendee costs, and we’re seeing a continued focus on providing locally grown, sustainable and organic menus. Planners are adjusting F&B patterns to manage budgets while promoting healthful alternatives.”

Visitor Profile for Buffalo Niagara Region

Source: Young Strategies, “Visitor Profile Research” conducted for Visit Buffalo Niagara, May 2015

Leisure Visitor Profile

- Average age is 55 years old
- 57% female
- Educated typically at or above the college level
- Length of stay is 2 nights
- Over half of visitors book within 30 days of arrival
- Travel party is usually 2 or 4 people, most likely adults only

Overnight Domestic Visitation

- Travel party spending: \$879.09 per stay
- Top 5 attractions visited:
 - Darwin Martin House – 41%
 - Canalside – 30%
 - Albright Knox Art Gallery – 25%
 - Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park – 22%
 - Graycliff – 21%
- Points of Origin: New York, Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, California

Overnight International Visitation

- Travel party spending: \$910.74 per stay
- Top 5 attractions visited:
 - Did not visit attractions – 38%
 - Darwin Martin House – 25%
 - Albright Knox Art Gallery – 20%
 - Graycliff – 12%
 - Buffalo Bisons game – 10%
- Points of Origin: Southern Ontario

Daytrip Domestic Visitation

- Travel party spending: \$225.70 per stay
- Top 5 attractions visited:
 - Darwin Martin House – 38%
 - Canalside – 20%
 - Albright Knox Art Gallery – 19%
 - Buffalo Zoo – 19%
 - Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park – 17%
- Points of Origin: New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Florida

Daytrip International Visitation

- Travel party spending: \$393.94 per stay
- Top 5 attractions visited:
 - Did not visit attractions – 42%
 - Darwin Martin House – 22%
 - Albright Knox Art Gallery – 16%
 - Buffalo Sabres game – 11%
 - Buffalo Zoo – 10%
- Points of Origin: Southern Ontario

Average Occupancy and Average Daily Rate History

YEAR	AVERAGE OCCUPANCY	AVERAGE DAILY RATE	BED TAX REVENUE	VBN BUDGET*
2008	68.2%	\$89.62	\$7,846,132	\$3,185,850
2009	62.3%	\$87.82	\$7,514,807	\$2,985,000
2010	64.6%	\$87.98	\$7,918,120	\$3,404,200
2011	65.9%	\$90.79	\$8,556,982	\$3,489,050
2012	66.3%	\$93.91	\$8,861,557	\$3,593,774
2013	65.4%	\$96.47	\$9,751,127	\$4,117,570
2014	64.1%	\$99.56	\$9,928,615	\$4,005,000
2015**	63.5%	\$101.65	\$10,325,760	\$4,011,133
2016**	63.0%	\$104.20	\$10,661,350	\$4,070,750

*includes Erie County grant allocation and VBN generated revenue

**2015/2016 projections

Erie County Supply / Demand

YEAR	ERIE COUNTY HOTEL INVENTORY	ERIE COUNTY SUPPLY	ERIE COUNTY DEMAND
2008	8,663 Rooms	3,126,524	2,133,051
2009	9,322 Rooms	3,293,652	2,083,426
2010	9,322 Rooms	3,401,734	2,200,686
2011	9,106 Rooms	3,291,131	2,174,851
2012	9,279 Rooms	3,360,266	2,231,167
2013	9,721 Rooms	3,452,216	2,258,604
2014	10,080 Rooms	3,576,890	2,293,022
2015**	10,459 Rooms	3,732,401	2,368,580
2016**	10,885 Rooms	3,878,350	2,444,136

**2015/2016 projections

Erie County Total Tourism Impact

YEAR	TRAVELER SPEND	LABOR INCOME	EMPLOYMENT	LOCAL TAXES	STATE TAXES
2008	\$1,464,107,000	\$754,674,000	28,504	\$ 93,786,000	\$91,188,000
2009	\$1,322,253,000	\$721,390,000	27,861	\$ 86,300,000	\$85,988,000
2010	\$1,368,210,000	\$744,088,000	28,198	\$ 88,423,000	\$84,823,000
2011	\$1,491,601,000	\$807,347,000	29,148	\$ 92,797,000	\$90,890,000
2012	\$1,567,228,000	\$833,666,000	28,909	\$105,893,000	\$86,009,000
2013	\$1,605,832,000	\$850,749,000	29,635	\$108,185,000	\$88,023,000
2014	\$1,638,866,000	\$864,890,000	29,888	\$111,538,000	\$89,463,000

New Developments for Fiscal Year 2016

- Opening of new hotel properties including the Westin, Curtiss Hotel & Hotel Henry
- Ongoing implementation of Strategic Plan 2015-2020
- Ongoing implementation of Visit Buffalo Niagara Academy program
- Continued implementation of Canadian Marketing Initiative in partnership with NTCC
- Expanded and enriched partnership with Brand USA
- Continued partnership with the Seneca Gaming Corporation
- Expanding air service development at Buffalo Niagara International Airport
- “Bring It Home” campaign for meetings/conventions and sporting events
- Ongoing implementation of international leisure market strategy
- Implementation of the sports tourism master plan
- Implementation of craft beer market strategy
- 90th anniversary of Shea’s Performing Arts Center
- Continued development of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus
- Preparation for anticipated 2016-17 completion of Darwin Martin House restoration; opening of Hotel Henry at the Richardson Olmsted Complex; continued restoration of Graycliff and move of Explore & More to Canalside.

Goals for Fiscal Year 2016

- Work with the County's VBN Funding Advisory Committee to explore ways to increase the VBN marketing and sales budget.
- Continue to participate in the County's Convention Center Study Committee to explore the future of the current or new Buffalo Niagara Convention Center.
- Ensure that VBN remains as the official voice of tourism in Erie County as we continue to work with economic development partners to be involved in decisions that impact the visitor and tourism infrastructure.
- Continue to explore regional marketing and advertising opportunities to jointly promote the Western New York region to regional, national and international visitors.
- Remain engaged with our hotels by providing expanded intelligence on meetings and sports hotel bookings including detailed pace reports and competitive analysis.
- Implement effective sales and marketing programs to remain as a top meetings and sports destination for state, regional and national programs.
- Work with the region's economic development organizations, academic and medical institutions to identify other key sectors to consider launching future conventions.
- Work to maintain and attract new, key conventions and signature sporting events to the county that have significant hotel room-nights and fit into our brand attributes.
- Continue to advocate to elected officials and the private sectors for enhancements to our sports venue options in Erie County in order for VBN to retain existing business while attracting new sporting events and tournaments to the area.
- Maintain excellent customer service programming in all aspects of the VBN. Work with visitor-sector businesses, organizations and employees in the Buffalo Niagara region to monitor, maintain and enhance the service experience at all visitor touch points.
- Ensure that VBN remains on the cutting edge with social media platforms and technology to engage new and existing customers of the destination.
- Continue to grow and enhance the VBN's Ambassador Program through the Bring It Home campaign. Efforts will be aimed at educating locals on the importance of conventions and sporting events to the region and generate support from local stakeholders to increase the number of conventions and events in Erie County and VBN's overall work and economic impact on the community.

Marketing Goals

The Marketing Department is responsible for the overall brand strategy as well as marketing to targeted domestic and international leisure visitors and convention, sports and travel trade markets. The primary goal of the department is to create compelling advertising, promotions, online, social media and partner programs, increasing overall visitation and hotel and sales tax revenue.

Marketing Objectives

- Position and brand the destination through leisure and lifestyle imagery.
- Continue to establish Buffalo Niagara's brand position and evolve its brand strategy by working with regional hospitality partners.
- Increase hotel occupancy and revenue through captivating domestic and/or international marketing programs – advertising, online, social media, and promotions.
- Continue to establish VisitBuffaloNiagara.com as the single official source for the area's tourism, restaurant, hotel, attraction, event, meeting, sports, fishing, travel media and partner information.
- Establish Buffalo Niagara as the meetings/conferences, sports/events and domestic/international tour and travel destination of choice through compelling advertising, collateral, social media and online marketing communications.
- Encourage visitors to do and spend more by creating persuasive promotional guides showcasing all that Buffalo, Erie County and Western New York have to offer and distribute them in visitor welcome centers and areas with high visitor traffic.
- Increase website traffic levels (unique users, length of sessions, page views) via search engine optimization, search engine marketing and other tactics.
- Convert Canadian day-trippers to overnight visitors.

Marketing Strategies, All Sectors

- Expand the scope of the destination brand strategy through additional online marketing campaigns and video productions.
- Continue implementation of a variety of tactics to take full advantage of social networking and video content marketing and position Buffalo and Erie County competitively among its peer destinations.
- Continue to create inspirational and engaging content on VisitBuffaloNiagara.com
- Continue to generate new photo assets of destination experiences.
- Explore and secure outside funding for regional marketing initiatives through statewide funding programs such as the Power Proceeds program and the Regional Economic Development Council Consolidated Funding Application grant process.
- In cooperation with Destination Development staff, develop a local strategy for National Tourism Week that will promote Visit Buffalo Niagara to Erie County businesses and residents.

Marketing Strategies, Leisure Visitors

- Continue to produce annual touring guide, marketing collateral and related sales materials.
- Manage and maintain VisitBuffaloNiagara.com website, Trip Advisor page and social media presence.
- Produce and distribute compelling promotional videos.
- Continue implementation of digital advertising campaign domestically and in Canada, with a

targeted focus on the Girlfriend Getaway market.

- Grow e-newsletter subscriber database through a targeted lead generation program.
- Continue to invest in Brand USA partnerships and incentives that position Buffalo for international visitation.
- Continue to leverage the Seneca Gaming Corporation partnership to market the destination to a regional audience.
- Implement a craft beer market strategy.
- Develop a leisure visitation campaign strategy that promotes the Buffalo brand across multiple activity/interest categories (e.g. architecture, art, history, culinary, fishing, performing arts, girlfriend getaways, etc.) with related calls-to-action and cross-promotions.

Marketing Strategies, Meetings & Conventions

- Arm sales staff with new collateral to supplement tradeshow booth installations at major shows throughout the year.
- Implement the Bring It Home campaign through collateral creation, PSAs, paid advertising, updated web content and more.
- Continue to develop persuasive and comprehensive meetings content for website.
- Enhance the venue content and assets in the meetings section of VisitBuffaloNiagara.com.
- Support Global Meetings Industry Day on April 16, 2016

Marketing Strategies, Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission

- Continue to support sports marketing with advertising, promotional brochures, and enhanced website content, tools and assets.

Marketing Strategies, Convention Services

- Continue to produce map pad and restaurant guide of the area for use in servicing meeting/conference delegates, sports/events attendees and leisure visitors; increase distribution of the map as budget allows.
- Work with City Dining Cards to market their app to delegates, attendees and visitors for discounts at local restaurants throughout Erie County.
- Identify high profile conventions, as appropriate to receive our social media package that includes signage, social media monitoring, contests and Random Acts of Kindness.

Marketing Strategies, Travel Trade

- In concert with other regional DMOs, I Love NY and Brand USA, cross-promote the region's assets to domestic and international markets.
- Increase visitation regionally by promoting festivals, special events, concerts, sports and cultural and historical venues through integrated marketing.
- Create and distribute new, targeted email messaging to domestic and international tour operators.
- Create customized, downloadable foreign language overviews of Buffalo Niagara and distribute via VisitBuffaloNiagara.com.

Marketing Department Success Measures

- Increase website users to 1,334,168
- Increase website page views to 4,250,260
- Increase website length of stay on site to 2:30
- Increase website electronic guide views to 8,000
- Increase consumer email database to 128,000
- Increase Facebook fans to 67,000
- Increase Instagram followers to 10,000
- Increase Twitter followers to 20,000
- Increase YouTube video productions to 10

MARKETING ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Marketing Committee Meeting												
Website content												
E-Newsletter Distribution (Domestic & Canadian)												
Quarterly Marketing Meeting with Seneca Gaming Corp.												
African American Heritage Guide												
Shopping Guide												
Restaurant Guide												
Buffalo Niagara Product Guide												
Map Pad												
Runner's Map												
National Women's Show, Toronto												
Touring Guide												
Annual Report												
ESTO Conference												

Communications Goals

The Marketing Department is also responsible for managing all external communication activities, including all public relations, media relations and community awareness functions. The out-of-market PR strategy will focus on media outlets reaching high-yield audience with the greatest likelihood to travel to Buffalo Niagara and Erie County, thus providing the greatest return on investment. Outlets will include national and regional in geo-targeted markets and targeted niche segments.

Communications Objectives

Local Objectives

- Elevate Visit Buffalo Niagara’s brand awareness to local consumers, media and members of the Buffalo Niagara hospitality community.
- Engage in building strong relationships with local television, print, radio and online media to help build credibility in the local and business community.
- Promote positive impact of tourism through public awareness initiatives and a series of press releases detailing travel figures specific to Erie County and the Western New York region.
- Work with appropriate communications and public relations representatives in local organizations to collaborate on story ideas and to ensure consistent messaging on branding and marketing the destination.
- Continue to develop a local connectors’ network of travel writers to pitch “hometown” travel articles to state, regional and national publications.

Out-Of-Market Objectives

- Generate positive media coverage on the Buffalo Niagara area as a premier domestic and international leisure, meetings and sports destination, while increasing the quality and quantity of print, broadcast and online coverage.
- Promote Buffalo as a top destination in the Northeastern United States and Canada by using brand attributes to attract leisure visitors.
- Pursue qualified travel media to visit the destination on individual visits or during planned group press trips.
- Work to develop and discover story ideas, new developments, events and unique publicity angles from local tourism industry.

Communications Strategies

- Write and distribute press releases around new developments, major exhibitions and events as well as renovations of current hotel properties and attractions.
- Write and distribute seasonal releases and ready-to-publish stories aimed at regional media outlets.
- Develop and regularly keep an online press room updated with press releases, backgrounders, media alerts and industry facts and figures to communicate news and information for easy access to media.
- Develop public relations campaigns to complement marketing plan initiatives.
- Continue to produce collateral pieces for media contacts, I Love NY media events and Discover America Day.
- Create an updateable press kit for digital marketing platform use with travel journalists and

writers.

- Expand photo library.
- Build and maintain a database of international travel and cultural journalists for outreach and press trips.
- Work with I Love NY’s Media Department to participate in media receptions in key markets.
- Host 35 individual media visits in 2016.
- Travel to New York City in cooperation with PR firm to hold desk-side visits with key media writing for leisure, lifestyle and meeting and convention publications.
- Pitch in key markets via desk-side visits and events with leading media writing for leisure, lifestyle and meeting and conferences publications.
- Join Society of American Travel Writers & attend Eastern Region conference.
- Continue to strengthen the use of social media as a proactive tool for media outreach, research and targeted pitching.
- Position VBN executive staff as travel industry experts for journalists to use as top-of-mind sources for stories on area tourism.

Media Relations Success Measures

- Publish at least 104 blog posts per year for VBN blog
- Facilitate at least 75 out-of-market media placements
- Facilitate at least 75 in-market media placements
- Host a minimum of 35 media visits
- Increase media impressions by TBD based on FY 2015 total impressions
- Media relations efforts should yield at least \$2 million in ad equivalency

COMMUNICATIONS ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Ongoing Media Relations												
Individual Media Visits												
NYC Media Event												
Regional Media Desk Visits												
Discover America Day, Toronto												
Society of American Travel Writers Eastern conference												
TBEX												

Convention Sales

The primary goal of the Visit Buffalo Niagara Sales Department is to promote Buffalo and Erie County as a convention and meetings destination, establishing a strong regional and national presence in the meetings industry, thus initiating direct economic impact by increasing hotel room night production for area hotel partners and incremental sales for restaurants, cultural attractions and transportation companies.

Convention Sales Objectives

- Generate leads and produce hotel room business for Erie County hotels and other county venues.
- Enhance awareness of Buffalo Niagara region by increasing our sales team's presence in key feeder markets (Mid-Atlantic and Northeast), targeting key meeting planners and decision makers who will bring conventions and meetings to Erie County.
- Promote local awareness of the "Bring it Home" program through the distribution of collateral in key locations, advertising, speaking engagements, social media, newsletter articles and Public Relations efforts.
- Collaborate with NYSDMO's in co-op marketing, updates to newyorkmeetings.com relative to advertising and tradeshow sponsorship opportunities.
- Partner with Buffalo Ambassadors from local and regional universities, associations and corporations. Work toward the common goal of selling our destination alongside these connectors who serve on boards and councils of national and regional organizations, as identified by backyard marketing. Educate them on the importance of their participation, to assist in bringing their respective organizations to the Buffalo Niagara region.
- With a focus on direct sales, continue to participate in industry related tradeshow; conduct sales blitzes and sponsor high profile events that will put the destination in the forefront of planners' minds.
- Work closely with the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center and key hotels to identify and solicit city-wide conventions and meetings that have the potential to use the facility.
- Visit Buffalo Niagara sales team members will continue to serve on and seek out leadership board of director and committee positions with national and regional industry organizations (e.g.; MPI, BNSME, ESSAE).
- VBN Sales team members will work with the Destination Development/Industry Relations department to develop an educational program for the local public, aiding us in our quest for local connectors' support.

Conventions Sales Target Markets

Overall strategy is a concentration of sales efforts towards:

- National, State and Regional Business *
- National, State and Regional Association Business *
- Continue to focus on regional business that is within the drive market or one-hour flight time, by emphasizing value, bottom-line cost and ROI to the host organization when meeting in Buffalo Niagara.

*Emphasis on Faith-based, Fraternal, Preservation, Health & Medical, Science & Engineering, Manufacturing/Distribution/Logistics, Agriculture & Food Products, Higher Education and Military Reunion vertical markets.

Conventions Sales Strategies

- Conduct an “All Market” Familiarization tour, with a primary focus on DC area meeting planners from targeted National Associations.
- Participate in industry trade shows and events which focus on key markets.
- Conduct site inspections for prospective and tentative clients.
- Utilize and enhance listings within third party online destination sales and marketing channels like Cvent.
- Work closely with Erie County Office of Economic Development, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, the Buffalo Niagara Partnership and the Regional Economic Development Corp. to identify, high growth industry clusters based on recognized strengths of the region. Concentrate on new emerging markets that are coming into the county, such as clean tech and advanced manufacturing.
- Present “Bring it Home” program in local sales presentations, speaking engagements and in local advertising opportunities. Work with the following agencies for phase one of the campaign; Erie County, City of Buffalo, Empire State Development, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Leadership Buffalo, University at Buffalo and Buffalo State University.
- Distribute “Bring it Home” campaign materials to key distribution points such as: Buffalo Convention Center, college and universities, medical campus, Rotary, Leadership Buffalo etc.
- Through the Buffalo Ambassador program, host community partners to bring members together and educate them on hotels and venues we have to offer.
- Create speakers bureau using local experts; list these names on our website to be used as a reference for meeting planners in need of speakers.
- Conduct regional third party planner “Meet and Greet” events, concentrating on Experient, Helms Briscoe and Conference Direct to educate them on existing and new Buffalo Niagara area product.
- Participate in member chapter events for networking and prospecting such as: POWER, Capital, NYCMA, NEPCMA.
- Partner with the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center to convene the Customer Advisory Council. The third annual meeting of established executive level convention/meeting planning professionals will continue dialogue dedicated to assisting us in strategic meetings destination management planning.
- Utilize e-marketing tools to promote Buffalo Niagara area and generate leads, through an integrated digital marketing campaign. Send e-newsletter “Tourism Insider” to targeted planners in CRM database, pre and post tradeshow contacts, and other potential clients, updating them on destination product, as well as directing them to website.
- Continue to work with marketing department to assist in developing dynamic collateral materials for consistent brand positioning for tradeshow, sales missions and other sales initiatives and programs.
- Work with marketing department to keep advertising placement consistent with target sales markets.
- Work with marketing department’s media relations/social media staff to develop pitch stories to local newspaper and broadcast media, to aid in educating locals on the Visit Buffalo Niagara sales efforts and its mission of increasing sustainable economic impact from conventions, meetings and reunions.

- Re-design the African American Heritage Guide for use as a marketing piece to attract more African American meetings, conventions and family reunions to coincide with Black History month.
- Work with marketing department’s media relations staff to develop quarterly news releases and briefings targeting the meetings industry through publications such as; Meetings East, M&C, Meetings Focus, Meeting Mentor, Convene, Religious Conference Manager & Association News.
- Conduct quarterly business strategy meetings with hotel directors of sales to review need periods and target prospects.
- Explore the opportunity to cross market with other destinations when applicable to expand customer prospect outreach and database.

Conventions Success Measures

- Generate XXX leads.
- Generate XXXXXX definite hotel room nights.
- Conduct a minimum of 15 weekly solicitations per sales director.
- Conduct XX site inspections for prospective and tentative clients.
- Conduct quarterly hotel director of sales meetings.
- Attend XX tradeshow and industry events targeting convention/meeting planners.
- Book 10 Convention Center pieces of business.
- Convene Visit Buffalo Niagara Sales Advisory Council meeting.
- Conduct monthly sales missions to Washington, DC and when appropriate coincide with the Potomac chapter of MPI and PCMA.
- Host Chef’s table and client receptions in Albany for State Association planners.
- Host quarterly seminars for locals to learn the “how to’s” of hosting a convention or reunion.
- Attend monthly NYS Association events with clients ESSAE and MPI NENY.

CONVENTION SALES ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Diversity Summit	■											
PCMA												
Experient Envision			■									
Springtime				■								
Christian Meetings and Convention Association					■							
Conference Direct Partner Meeting Tradeshow				■				■				
Direct Selling Association												
X Site New England						■						
MPI WEC							■					
PCMA Education Conference								■				
Council of Engineering and Scientific Executives									■			
YMRC Show												
Fraternal Executive Association												
Connect Marketplace									■			
Connect Specialty												
Rejuvenate Marketplace											■	
NYS AFL-CIO												
MPINENY												
Nursing Organization Alliance												■
Small Market Meetings												■
Bring It Home Program quarterly presentations			■			■			■			■
Global Travel Pavilion Congressional Black Caucus												

Sports Sales

The Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission, a division of the Visit Buffalo Niagara sales department, markets and promotes the Buffalo Niagara region and the area's sports venues in order to attract new business for the region in the form of sports events, tournaments and championships. The BNSC also works closely with local partner organizations to successfully host and service existing events primarily for the purpose of enhancing the product and developing repeat business. Both the marketing and service components are designed to effectively position and brand Buffalo Niagara as one of the nation's premier sports event destinations.

Sports Marketing Objectives

- Generate sports business leads and produce hotel room night business for Erie County hotels and other county businesses.
- Promote local awareness of the "Bring it Home" program through advertising, speaking engagements, social media, newsletter articles and Public Relations efforts.
- Work with marketing department's media relations staff to develop quarterly news releases and briefings targeting sports/events publications like: Sports Travel, Sports Events, NASC website.
- Generate positive exposure and visibility through social media (Facebook, twitter and Instagram) and e-newsletter for Erie County and its venues.
- Provide excellent leadership and/or support in the area of hosting and servicing.
- Position Buffalo Niagara as a "premier destination" for hosting sporting events.
- Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with local host partners and organizations.
- Increase local awareness of the sports/events industry as a key generator of economic impact in Buffalo Niagara.
- Engage Sports Advisory Council to assist in executing the TSE Consulting recommendations for the Amateur Sports Master Plan designed to advise and provide data to public and private entities and community constituents on proposed product development. Encourage facility and venue development that will create increased visitor business and economic impact.
- Advocate for new and improved sports facilities and venues in Erie County. Consult, advise and provide data upon request to public and private entities and community constituents on proposed product development. Encourage sports facility development that will ultimately generate increased visitor business and economic impact for Erie County.
- Establish a sports speaker series program that will articulate the importance of sports sales for the destination as well as expand the event opportunities for Buffalo Niagara venues.

Sports Sales Target Audiences

- Core sports: Soccer, softball, baseball, lacrosse, ice hockey, swimming & diving, track & field, ice skating, equestrian, emerging sports, extreme sports, fresh water sports/fishing and cycling
- Focus on organizations: NCAA, MAAC, NYSAA, AAU, NHL, NFL, USOC National Governing Bodies, plus many youth and amateur organizations and associations.
- Collegiate sports (NCAA Championships, MAAC & conference championships).
- High School sports.
- Professional sports
- Geographic scope: National, regional and statewide (and occasional international).

Sports Sales Strategies

- Execute the recommendations made by TSE consulting in the comprehensive Sports Master Plan. Using the plan as a guide to improve upon sports sales, and marketing efforts as well as provide an outline of future venue needs and development and event opportunities.
- Use Social Media (Twitter) to target events rights holders. Promote Buffalo's renaissance as a reason to consider Buffalo as a destination to hold an event.
- Attend national tradeshows to meet one on one with event rights holders and national governing bodies to promote Buffalo Niagara as a premier destination to host sport competitions.
- Prospect strategically for new business, primarily through existing contacts and client relationships, but also via NASC events database, the internet, sports directories, industry publications, industry contacts and similar resources.
- Research and evaluate potential events (in coordination with our host partners) to determine which ones are the "right fit" for Buffalo Niagara.
- Contact local sports organizations, clubs and associations to learn which events they compete in at the statewide, regional or national levels, and determine which of those events might be a reasonable and desirable fit for Buffalo Niagara. Determine which of those organizations would be interested in helping to recruit, manage and host the event once it has been booked.
- Present "Bring it Home" program in local sales presentations, speaking engagements and in local advertising opportunities.
- Develop and generate qualified sports leads for Buffalo Niagara hotels.
- Produce high-quality bid proposals and presentations for select sporting events.
- Work closely with hotels, venues and local host organizations and partners to develop lead opportunities and to provide quality services.
- Travel as needed to make sales calls and presentations, in order to recruit and secure new sports business.
- Organize and host site inspections and client events for rights holders and event planners to showcase the area's sports venues, accommodations and attractions.
- Engage Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission Advisory Council through targeted communications/quarterly meetings and special events.
- Continue to work closely with the communications department to identify media opportunities to increase awareness of the BNSC.
- Work with communications department to develop quarterly news releases and briefings targeting the sports industry through publications such as; Sports Travel and Sports Events Magazine.

Sport Sales Success Measures

- Generate XXX sales leads for sporting events and competitions.
- Generate XXXXXX definite room nights.
- Conduct a minimum of 15 weekly solicitations for new business per sales director.
- Attend X tradeshows targeting sports/events planners such as; NASC, CONNECT Sports, TEAMS, US Sports Congress.
- Execute Sports Master Plan for VBN and the Buffalo Niagara region.
- Conduct a minimum of XX individual site visits for sports/events planners.
- Generate a quarterly communication for the sports advisory council.
- Coordinate and execute one to two sports speaker series sessions.

SPORTS SALES ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
National Association of Sports Commission				■								
Connect Sports								■				
US Olympic Committee									■			
S.P.O.R.T.S. Institute									■			
US Aquatic Sports									■			
TEAMS												
United State Track & Field Assoc.												■
US Sports Congress												■
Sport Commission Communications	■			■			■			■		
NASC Board Meetings				■				■				
Sports Speaker Series Sessions						■						■
Sports Advisory Council Meeting		■			■			■			■	

Sports Client Services

Sports Client Services is responsible for enhancing the rights holder and visitor experience through excellent customer service. Our purpose is to work with destination partners to help deliver a wonderful and distinct Buffalo Niagara experience. We believe that by building strong relationships and providing extraordinary experiences, we build a “services to sales” approach that will affect repeat and referral business and positively impact the county’s economy.

Sports Client Services Objectives

- Increase attendance at Buffalo Niagara sporting events.
- Provide an exceptional experience to event organizers to ensure rebooking opportunities.
- Serve as liaison between event organizers/clients and Buffalo Niagara’s tourism industry.
- Maintain a high commitment to customer service excellence internally (to partners and peers) and externally (to clients and visitors).
- Use the servicing and planning process to grow client relationships. By providing “one stop shop” services, we will integrate a cooperative spirit between event organizers and Erie County hospitality partners.

Client Services Strategies

- Consult with clients to identify specific needs. As their partner, provide a menu of services, past successes and examples as guidelines to customer services.
- Identify local partners, venues and other services to assist event organizers in producing successful events.
- Offer a social media platform as additional resource for attendees to enhance their visitor experience.
- Create customized attendance building materials.
- Conduct meetings or conference calls with event organizers, their marketing and public relations departments to strategize how Visit Buffalo Niagara can assist with their efforts to create event awareness and promote the destination.
- Offer the services of VBN Marketing Department to include press releases, social media, creative messaging, and customized accurate maps for reproduction.
- Educate clients on other services offered by Visit Buffalo Niagara including housing services, welcome letters, volunteers, visitor information and welcome from local dignitaries.

- Utilize volunteer management software to assist in scheduling volunteers for meetings, convention and sporting events.
- Continue ongoing quarterly training for Buffalo Ambassador volunteers to keep them up-to-date on changes in cultural attractions, restaurants, and events.
- Recruit Buffalo Ambassador volunteers through local college Sports Management Departments and athletic departments to increase our pool of volunteers.
- Assist clients in identifying possible local area corporations that may be considered for sponsorship.
- Obtain history of an event by attending events or having calls with destinations that have been previous hosts for events that we will be hosting.
- Increase involvement with local colleges and their sport management/hospitality programs
- Maintain a comprehensive resource of all our venues with their specs, contacts, pictures, features, distance to the nearest hotels etc.
- Create customer satisfaction survey for sports planners, and implement a client incentive program to increase completed surveys.

Tour and Travel Sales

Travel trade is a division of VBN’s sales department, designed to market and promote Buffalo Niagara and Western New York to attract domestic and international group and frequent independent travelers (F.I.T.) to the region in the form of leisure motor coach groups and individual international travelers.

Target Audiences

Domestic Seniors/Adults

International / FIT - Primary target markets: Canada, China, Germany & UK

Secondary markets: Australia, India, Brazil, Italy

Emerging markets: South Korea, Russia

Domestic and International Student / Youth

Travel Trade Strategies

- Attend and participate at domestic and international tradeshows such as IPW, NTA & OMCA, to promote Buffalo Niagara as a premier destination for tour groups.
- Host NYC Sales Exchange & FAM in Buffalo; bring together Buffalo Niagara hotels and attractions with NYC based receptive operators.
- Work with tour operators to identify unique overnight stay options with Erie County hotel properties that match the specific needs of targeted markets/countries.
- Identify appropriate opportunities with tour operators to market and promote Buffalo Niagara attractions to increase group and FIT visitation.
- Work closely with the Greater Niagara Region, I Love NY and the international I Love NY offices to cultivate new sales relationships through co-op marketing/site inspections/FAMs.
- Partner with I Love NY offices on the Germany sales mission designed to meet face to face with tour operators in order to sell them on the greater Buffalo Niagara region.
- Explore the opportunity of creating an online international tour operator/travel agent certification program to better sell the destination to consumers in their market.
- Further develop Buffalo Niagara technical tour opportunities/products.

Travel Trade Success Measures

- Generate XXX sales leads.
- Generate XXXXXX definite room nights.
- Conduct a minimum of 15 weekly solicitations.
- Conduct XX site visits and fam tours.
- Attend X tradeshows targeting the travel trade and group planners.

TRAVEL TRADE SALES ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
American Bus Association	■											
National Tour Association	■											
Heartland Travel Showcase		■										
L&L Travel Showcase			■									
Florida Sales Mission			■									
International Pow Wow						■						
International Sales Mission						■						
Domestic Sales Mission												■
NYC Receptive Operator Marketplace & FAM										■		
Ontario Motor Coach Association											■	
I Love New York International FAM tour TBA											■	

Client Services

Client Services is responsible for enhancing the planner and attendee experience through excellent customer service. Our purpose is to work with destination partners to help deliver a wonderful and distinct Buffalo Niagara experience. VBN's leadership for the destination will focus on integrating programs that will add value and maximize the group visitor experience. We believe that by building strong relationships and providing extraordinary experiences, we build a "services to sales" approach that will affect repeat and referral business and positively impact the county's economy.

Client Services Objectives

- Increase attendance at Buffalo Niagara conventions, meetings and sporting events.
- Provide an exceptional experience to event organizers to ensure rebooking opportunities for the destination.
- Promote "Bring it Home" program to local meeting & convention hosts.
- Serve as liaison between event organizers/clients and the destination's tourism industry.
- Maintain a high commitment to customer service excellence internally (to partners and peers) and externally (to clients and visitors).
- Use the servicing and planning process to grow client relationships. By providing "one stop shop" services, we will integrate a cooperative spirit between planners and Erie County hospitality partners.

Client Services Strategies

- Consult with clients to identify specific needs. As their partner, provide a menu of services, past successes and examples as guidelines to customer services.
- Identify local partners, venues and other services to assist planners in producing successful events.
- Offer the benefit of the "Bring it Home" campaign to locals who host a meeting/convention.
- Offer a social media platform as additional resource for attendees to enhance their visitor experience.
- Create customized attendance building materials.
- Conduct meetings or conference calls with planners, their marketing and public relations departments to strategize how Visit Buffalo Niagara can assist with their efforts to create event awareness and promote the destination.
- Offer the services of VBN Marketing Department to include press releases, social media, creative messaging, and customized accurate maps for reproduction.
- Educate clients on other services offered by Visit Buffalo Niagara including housing services, welcome letters, volunteers, visitor information and welcome from local dignitaries.
- Utilize volunteer management software to assist in scheduling volunteers for meetings, convention and sporting events.
- Continue ongoing quarterly training for Buffalo Ambassador volunteers to keep them up-to-date on changes in cultural attractions, restaurants, and events.
- Recruit Buffalo Ambassador volunteers to increase our pool of volunteers.
- Create customer satisfaction survey for meeting and convention planners, and implement a client incentive program to increase completed surveys.
- Investigate the creation of a registration program that could be utilized when a client requests registration staff.
- Assist clients in identifying possible local area corporations that may be considered for sponsorship.

Client Services Success Measures

- 50% returned Customer satisfaction surveys
- An average customer satisfaction score of 4.5 out of 5
- XX groups serviced
- Conduct quarterly training for Buffalo Ambassadors

CONVENTION SERVICES ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Create Customer Satisfaction Survey	■											
Deploy/Collect/ Review Customer Survey	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Buffalo Ambassador Volunteer Training	■			■				■			■	
Buffalo Ambassador Recruitment	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Attend ESPA	■											
Update VBN Services Collateral Materials		■			■			■			■	

Destination Development and Industry Relations

The Destination Development and Industry Relations Department leads Visit Buffalo Niagara's destination development efforts by working with tourism industry partners and the business community to enhance and strengthen the visitor experience in the destination. It is also responsible for providing excellent customer service to visitors at information centers while, at the same time, providing education, engagement and partnership opportunities for industry partners

Destination Development and Industry Relations Objectives

- Improve and communicate the value of VBN efforts regarding the VBN mission, its objectives, its marketing process, the value of its works and economic impact thereof, along with market data that is useful for its constituents.
- Continue to serve leisure and group visitors to the destination, ensuring they have all the resources necessary to enjoy their stay or extend their stay while in the Western New York region.
- Provide timely and comprehensive fulfillment to requests for visitor information.
- Work with Client Services to ensure that meetings and sports delegates receive the necessary assistance and information to make their stay pleasant and memorable.
- Maintain a high commitment to customer service excellence internally (to Visit Buffalo Niagara partners and the industry) as well as externally (to visitors and clients).
- Serve as the official resource for visitors and the industry of:
 - Visitor information
 - Enhancing the visitor experience
- Foster a culture of connecting, learning and collaborating within the industry to promote destination prosperity.
- Cultivate relationships that advance the hospitality and tourism profession to educational institutions.

Destination Development and Industry Relations Strategies

- Conduct periodic visitor intercepts to assess perceptions of the Visitor Center's performance and services offered.
- Catalog visitor feedback to ensure that responses are provided and local partners are aware to allow for future improvement.
- Work with our Administrative Department to highlight the need for updated wayfinding and external signage to better direct visitors to the Center.
- Provide comprehensive visitor resources and consultation services through two Visitor Centers.
 - Adequately staff and train Visitor Center personnel and volunteers.
 - Ensure that city, county and regional tourism businesses are represented appropriately through brochure display and distribution and consistently maintain and grow awareness by actively engaging the personnel in these locations.

- Quarterly review the number, type and quality of visitor-related businesses that are represented in the Center to ensure that we are meeting the visitor's needs.
- Provide oversight on pricing and mix of merchandise being sold at visitor centers.
- Continually explore opportunities for the downtown Visitor Center to be the originating location for various tours.
- Explore opportunities for assisting visitors in making hotel or dinner reservations, using kiosk or other available means.
- Provide region-wide brochure distribution to hotels, attractions, restaurants, and other high-profile, trafficked areas to maximize availability for visitors to obtain the most current visitor publications.
 - Develop a schedule to check high-traffic locations to ensure VBN literature availability
- Identify new and existing tourism-related businesses and encourage them to connect with VBN and the tourism industry.
 - Conduct community outreach by working with chambers of commerce, neighborhood groups and official improvement districts
- Under the Visit Buffalo Niagara Academy umbrella, provide year-round programs to ensure industry partners receive, understand and utilize their benefits:
 - "Arrival to Departure" tourism awareness certification training program for all partners and, included in the training, familiarization tours for industry front-line staff and volunteers.
 - Quarterly industry meetings to engage tourism industry businesses based on relevant content associated to their needs (for example, experiential travel, packaging, sales, training and social media).
 - Coordinate annual Visit Buffalo Niagara Holiday Open House and monthly themed events to promote our partners and increase awareness of Visitor Center location and services.
 - Calendar of communication/highlights/industry news via social media, and e-newsletters.
- Increase awareness of the National Travel & Tourism Beacon Awards luncheon to encourage and increase award nominations and table sponsorships.
- Assume the lead while working in cooperation with the Marketing Department to develop a local strategy for National Tourism Week that will promote and engage Visit Buffalo Niagara with Erie County businesses and residents.

- Coordinate Hospitality Scholarships given by VBN, Hotel/Motel Association and the Western New York Chapter NYS Restaurant Association.
- Continue to recruit and train volunteers to assist and serve in various capacities to welcome and engage visitors to the destination.

Destination Development and Industry Relations Success Measures

- Combined merchandise sales goal of \$XXXX in 2016, an increase of ____%.
- Combined traffic to visitor centers of XXX, an increase of ____%.
- Plan, coordinate and execute the National Travel & Tourism Beacon Awards luncheon.
 - Grow 2015 levels of attendance and table sponsorship by 2%.
- Plan, coordinate and execute annual scholarship program.
- Plan, coordinate and execute National Travel & Tourism week activities.
- Plan, coordinate and execute annual industry educational summit with input from Sales and Marketing Departments.
 - Maintain 2015 levels of attendance and sponsorship
- Plan, coordinate and execute four industry meetings (each with educational topic) and other networking opportunities
- Plan, coordinate and implement new tourism awareness certification program, recognizing first graduates at luncheon in May.
- Continue to grow Buffalo Ambassador Network from 3,700 contacts to 5,000 contacts by 2020.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT / INDUSTRY RELATIONS ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Beacon Awards Luncheon / Annual Meeting												
Beacon Awards Planning Committee												
Beacon Awards Nomination Period												
Scholarship Program Application Period												
Educational Summit Planning Committee												
Educational Summit												
Quarterly Industry Meeting												
Volunteer Orientation												
Partner Extranet Training												
Frontline Staff FAM Tour												
Visitor Center Open House												
Visitor intercept surveys												
Catalog visitor feedback												
Touring Guide Distribution												
Touring Guide Distribution Quality Control Check												
Tourism Insider												
Travel Pulse												

Administrative Goals

The primary goal of the Administrative Department is to provide managerial guidance to all Visit Buffalo Niagara Departments related to staffing, management, operational efficiencies, organization strategic planning, education and community-based initiatives that position Visit Buffalo Niagara as the leader in hospitality and tourism-based economic development for Erie County.

Administrative Objectives

- Maintain the proactive reporting, measurements and formats of monthly, quarterly and yearly tourism data through the acquisition of third-party research and economic metrics to better communicate economic impact to media, industry and policymakers.
- Maintain a comparative reporting and benchmarking system for group sales, group booking pace and interactive analytics from media placement, social media outlets and VisitBuffaloNiagara.com. These measurements will be used for both internal and external analysis.
- Continue to seek out all Western New York regional partnerships with area organizations that can positively impact Buffalo Niagara visitation, make Western New York regionalism beyond our borders a standard practice.
- Continue to provide efficient, convenient, responsive and customer-oriented support services to the organization.
- Provide essential human resource functions to the organization.
- Safeguard Visit Buffalo Niagara's financial assets and manage its financial resources in accordance with the organizational by-laws.
- Provide contract compliance support services and centralized guidance to all Visit Buffalo Niagara departments related to contract planning, execution, performance and monitoring.
- Continue to reach out to elected officials, the business community, media and local residents to educate them on the economic value of tourism and the value of Visit Buffalo Niagara's efforts.
- Establish mechanisms for the development of alternative funding sources for Visit Buffalo Niagara by creating partnerships with local and national vendors specific to tourism economic development and visitation that assists in creating shared revenue channels beyond tax collection.
- Position Buffalo Niagara as a sustainable destination through collaborative initiatives with our public municipal leaders. Seek out certification promotion opportunities with organizations to positively impact visitors and partners.
- Encourage Visit Buffalo Niagara staff to take leadership roles with local, state and national organizations to raise the level of professionalism and credibility of the organization.
- Work with economic development partners to be the official source of visitor and tourism information for any hotel developers, attractions or other hospitality related projects.
- Work with local, state and national organizations to monitor and actively voice our opinions or concerns relating to legislative issues that may impact Visit Buffalo Niagara or the tourism industry in general.
- Improve outreach and education to our local media outlets about the importance of tourism and the current trends in the Buffalo and Erie County market.

- Work with local, state and national officials and staff to address issues surrounding the short-term housing rentals and ride-sharing programs. We will monitor and actively voice our opinions or concerns relating to these activities.
- Continue to create committees or taskforce groups to address our various destination needs to ensure we have collaboration throughout Erie County and Western New York.
- Throughout the year, implement and engage the process to incorporate the 2015-2020 Visit Buffalo Niagara Strategic Plan.

Administrative Strategies

- Visit Buffalo Niagara will engage a third-party provider (ARENA) to aggregate the data from our CRM system and website and provide a comparative reporting and bench marketing system for group sales transactions, group booking pace and interactive analytics from VisitBuffaloNiagara.com. This data will be shared with our hotel and facility partners for forecasting, budgeting and ROI measurement.
- Provide timely IT problem resolution and customer service to Visit Buffalo Niagara staff.
- Have a work environment that inspires employees through recognition and open communication.
- Ensure that administrative directives and policies are easily accessible and understood by staff.
- Oversee and monitor all expenditures of the organization to ensure operational budget is maximized.
- Provide timely financial reports to board members and other stakeholders to enhance the quality and efficiency by which financial services are delivered.
- Manage and coordinate the annual budget process including the revenue and expenditure forecasting.
- Administer all accounting functions to assure proper control and recording of financial transactions and compliance with fiscal policies.
- Continue to oversee the management and coordination of various contractual obligations for Visit Buffalo Niagara.
- Work in conjunction with Accounting and IT Departments to find the best software programs or technology environments that deliver the highest return-on-investment and efficiencies.
- Continue working with our elected county, city and town officials along with associated parties to ensure that the inter-local expenditures and opportunities are made on programs or infrastructure that will deliver the best ROI and address facilities that we do not currently have in our county-wide inventory.
- Continue to execute a strategy with other Visit Buffalo Niagara departments to identify alternative revenue channels and cooperative cost savings to include partnerships and program revenues from travel, entertainment, media, retail and advertising agreements. The fiscal year 2015 business plan will include an obtainable non-tax revenue goal and focus on programming related to the following:
 - Video content
 - VisitBuffaloNiagara.com
 - Visit Buffalo Niagara Touring Guide and other collateral materials
 - Passkey Enabled Housing
 - Consolidated sponsorship strategy for signature events

- Destination brand and experience management
- Tourism data analytics and data intelligence curation
- Visitor Information Centers
- Serve in a proactive advise-and-consent role with local economic development partners on tourism-related projects
- Coordinate the opportunity to conduct regular speaking engagements with area civic groups. Attend various area events and activities hosted by local organizations and civic groups.
- Conduct community presentations to governmental/municipal, standing committees and departments, county based town councils and area chambers of commerce. Throughout the year, assign staff to cover various community events and to act as liaisons between Visit Buffalo Niagara and the host organizations.
- Work with area media and meet with their editorial staffs to educate them on the value of tourism programs that Visit Buffalo Niagara is involved with that have a positive impact for businesses and residents.
- Make sure that Visit Buffalo Niagara staff is involved with U.S. Travel Association, Brand USA, Destination Marketing Association International, Empire State Development, New York State Hospitality and Travel Association, New York State Destination Marketing Organization as well as other national, state, regional and local associations to ensure that we have a voice on local, state, national and international issues impacting Buffalo Niagara tourism.
- Complete a review and update of the 2013 Peer City Benchmarking Study, utilizing the expertise and knowledge of VBN’s Customer Advisory Council as a new resource for marketing and destination intelligence.

ADMINISTRATION ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
VBN Board Meeting	■			■			■			■		
VBN Executive Committee Meeting	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
VBN Finance/Audit Committee Meeting	■											
VBN Travel Pulse	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Sports Advisory Council Meeting		■			■		■			■		
Quarterly Meeting with Erie County Executive		■			■		■			■		■
Preliminary FY2017 Budget to Erie County								■				
Erie County VBN Funding Advisory Committee												
Erie County Convention Center Study Committee												
Quarterly Meeting with City of Buffalo Mayor	■			■			■			■		
Monthly Marketing Meeting with Seneca Gaming Corp.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
NYSDMO Meeting			■			■			■			■
NYSHTA Legislative Day			■			■			■			■
US Travel Destination Council Board Meeting		■			■		■			■		■
US Travel Destination Capitol Hill			■									
US Travel ESTO								■				
Destination Marketing Association International							■					
Submit DMAP Annual Report									■			
Buffalo Niagara Partnership CAN AM Meeting	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Bi-National Mayors Quarterly Meetings		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Quarterly Hotel General Manager Meeting		■			■			■			■	
Annual Audit			■									
Update Benchmarking Study									■			

Summary of Visit Buffalo Niagara Measurable Performance Objectives				
Organization Measure		2015 Actual	2016 Goal	% Change
Administration				
1	Erie County Occupancy (STR)*	64.10%		
2	Erie County Average Daily Rate (STR)*	\$ 99.56		
3	Erie County RevPAR (STR)*	\$ 63.83		
4	Erie County Hotel Tax Collection	\$ 9,956,845		
5	Monthly Travel Pulse Distribution	10		
6	In-Kind Partnership Services Value	N/A		
7	Paid Partnership Services Value	N/A		
8	Marketing Grant Funds Received	\$ 367,000		
9	Speakers Bureau Presentations	N/A		
Marketing				
Digital				
10	Website Users	813,806		
11	Website Page Views	2,781,254		
12	Website Time on Site	2:20		
13	Website Electronic Touring Guide Views	7,500		
14	Website Canadian Users	113,932		
15	E-Newsletter database	119,000		
Social Media				
16	Facebook Fans	64,500		
17	Twitter Followers	17,000		
18	Instagram Followers	7,500		
19	Video Productions	8		
Media Relations				
22	Media Placements – out-of-market	100		
22	Ad Equivalency Value	\$2 million		
23	Media Visits	35		
Sales				
Conventions				
26	Conventions Leads Distributed (2014 Goal - 361)	359		
27	Conventions Definite Room Nights (2014 Goal - 75,150)	76,175		
28	Conventions Definite Bookings (2014 Goal – 142)	152		
29	Conventions Economic Impact	\$54,730,000		
30	Conventions Sales Calls	775		
31	Conventions Site Visits	36		
32	Conventions Tradeshow	13		
Sports				
33	Sports Leads Distributed (2014 Goal – 275)	302		
34	Sports Definite Room Nights (2014 Goal - 78,500)	83,979		
35	Sports Definite Bookings (2014 Goal – 139)	172		
36	Sports Economic Impact	\$61,980,000		
Organization Measure		2015 Actual	2016 Goal	% Change
37	Sports Sales Calls	639		
38	Sports Site Visits	12		
39	Sports Tradeshow	6		
Travel Industry				
40	Travel Industry Leads Distributed (2014 Goal – 170)	171		

41	Travel Industry Definite Rm Nights (2014 Goal – 9,350)	10,293		
42	Travel Industry Definite Bookings (2014 Goal – 92)	136		
43	Travel Industry Economic Impact	\$3,457,000		
44	Travel Industry Sales Calls	880		
45	Travel Industry Site/FAM Visits	9		
46	Travel Industry Tradeshows	5		
Services				
47	Groups Serviced	200		
48	Completed Services Surveys	N/A		
49	Services Average Survey Score	N/A		
Destination Development Industry Relations				
50	Visitor Center Traffic	94,994		
51	Visitor Center Retail Sales	\$243,521		
52	Partner Database	1833		
53	Partner Extranet Training Sessions	0		
54	VBN Academy Programs	5		
55	VBN Academy Average Survey Score	0		
56	VBN Beacon Awards Sponsorship	\$11,400		
57	VBN Beacon Awards Attendance	440		
58	Tourism Insider Distribution	8		
59	Frontline Training	N/A		
Note: Highlighted items are new measurements for 2015				

*Projections from Smith Travel Report for monitoring purposes

Industry Membership and Leadership Positions

Patrick Kaler, President & CEO

- U.S. Travel Association, Board of Directors
- U.S. Travel Association, Destination Council Board of Directors
- U.S. Travel Association, Destination Council 2nd Vice Chair
- U.S. Travel Association, PAC Member
- Destination Marketing Association International
- New York State Hospitality & Travel Association, Board of Directors
- New York State Hospitality & Travel Association, Secretary
- New York Destination Marketing Organization Association
- Buffalo Niagara Partnership CAN AM Council
- Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin Martin Complex, Board of Directors
- The Eric Wood Foundation, Executive Advisory Board
- Member, Leadership Buffalo

Linda D'Agostino, Director of Sales and Government Relations

- Meeting Planners International Northeastern NY Chapter Board (Immediate Past President)
- Membership Committee for New York State Association Executives

Mike Even, Vice President of Sales and Services

- Buffalo Niagara Sales & Marketing Executives (Programming Committee)
- Trocaire College – Advisory Council for the Hospitality Management Program

Karen Fashana, Marketing Manager

- U.S. Travel Association ESTO Planning Committee
- Visitor Experience Committee – Darwin Martin House
- Marketing Committee - Graycliff

Pete Harvey, Director of Sports Development

- NASC Board of Directors
- Co-Chair NASC Sports Legacy Committee
- NASC Retained Earnings Committee
- NASC Symposium Committee
- Brian Moorman Punt Foundation Board of Directors

Ed Healy, Vice President of Marketing

- Innovation, Creativity & Entrepreneurship Advisory Council at SUNY Buffalo State
- Darwin Martin House Marketing Committee
- Garden Walk Buffalo Niagara Board of Directors

Cindy Kincaide, Director of Destination Development & Industry Relations

- Board President – Buffalo Green Fund, Inc.
- Board Member – GOBike Buffalo
- Board Member – Buffalo Civic Auto Ramps, Inc.
- Community Advisory Board Member – WNED-TV
- Culinary Advisory Group Member – Erie 1 BOCES
- Member, Leadership Buffalo

Leah Mueller, Director of Tourism Sales

- Shea’s Marketing Committee
- OMCA Supplier Council
- OMCA Conference Committee
- Executive Planning Committee Boys Scouts of America, Pack 236

Allison Pawarski, Sports Event Manager

- Camp Good Days and Special Times Buffalo Gala Committee

Lori White, National Sales Director

- Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) – Advocacy Task Force
- Association of Meeting Professionals (AMPs)
- 43 North Finals Week Planning Committee
- Kenmore Farmers Market Co-chair
- Village of Kenmore Planning Board
- Kenmore Children’s Concert Series Coordinator
- Bright Buffalo Planning Committee
- Rise of the Rest Planning Committee
- Association of University Research Parks 2015 Conference Planning Committee
- Buffalo Olmsted Park Conservancy Gala Committee

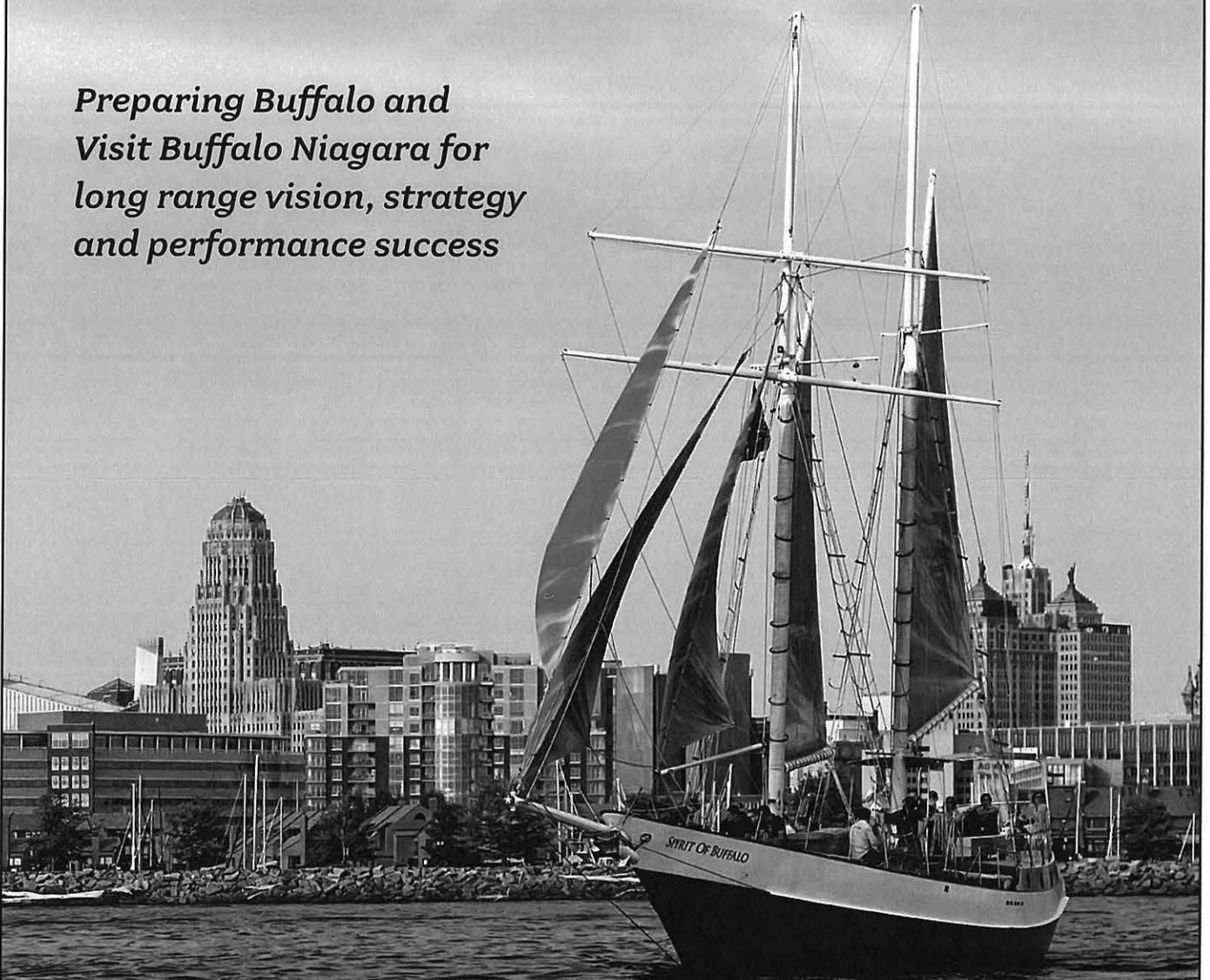
Dionne Williamson, Sales Director; SMERF and Corporate

- Friends of Broderick Park Committee



2015-2020 Strategic Plan

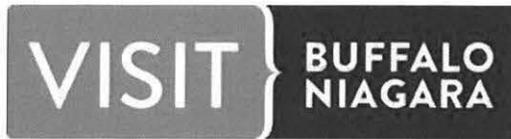
*Preparing Buffalo and
Visit Buffalo Niagara for
long range vision, strategy
and performance success*



PREPARED BY
**Marshall Murdaugh, President,
Marshall Murdaugh Marketing**

*Adopted by the Board of Directors on
September 30, 2014*

TERRY CERVY



Dear Visit Buffalo Niagara Stakeholder:

We are pleased to share with you our new Visit Buffalo Niagara five year strategic plan to help chart a productive future course for Buffalo Niagara and its tourism industry. Marshall Murdaugh, President, Marshall Murdaugh Marketing in cooperation with Ralph Thompson President and Chief Brain of eBrains, Inc. were hired to facilitate the strategic planning process including: industry surveys, performance comparison, input sessions and a planning session with the VBN board of directors and senior staff. Murdaugh Marketing and eBrains analyzed tourism related statistics in addition to research of the current and pending development taking place in Buffalo and Erie County. The following pages reflect their independent expert analysis and council for VBN's future plans to market, sell and promote our destination.

If you were among the many stakeholders who participated in this process with we want to personally thank you for your candid observations and recommendations. They helped create the development of more than thirty pages of new opportunities in this plan that will assist in assuring Buffalo Niagara's tourism success for the years ahead.

These are truly exciting times for our destination. Area visitor receipts hit an all-time annual high in 2012, with the latest estimates totaling \$1.567 billion dollars in tourism economic impact for Erie County—a 5.1% increase over the prior year—while also supporting 28,909 local jobs and producing visitor state and local tax revenues estimated at \$192 million dollars. In 2013, Erie County Bed Tax Revenue reached an all-time high in collections of over \$9.7 million.

As your official destination marketing organization, Visit Buffalo Niagara is equipped with best business practices, goal-based planning and the growing support from government and hundreds of community stakeholders. We're truly excited and energized to be launching this ambitious plan, because it couldn't come at a more propitious time as a new wave of renewed optimism continues throughout the city and region.

We encourage your continued participation and thank you for your support as we collaboratively work together to assure the brightest future ahead.

Dennis P. Murphy
Chairman, Board of Directors

Patrick J. Kaler
President & CEO

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The Strategic Planning Process

Creating this plan involved a number of key steps and inputs, highlighted by the perceptions, insights and recommendations from numerous Visit Buffalo Niagara (VBN) stakeholders and partners.

- **A diagnostics assessment** of current VBN marketing and management programs and documents was conducted by strategic planning consultant, Marshall Murdaugh, who also compiled plan inputs from stakeholders, provided additional strategic recommendations and then produced the initial draft of this plan.
- **An internet-based stakeholder perception survey** by noted performance management consultant Wil Brewer, President of Performance-Solutions-Group, was conducted to garner opinions from community partners.
- **A series of focus group discussions** conducted by Marshall Murdaugh, President of Marshall Murdaugh Marketing, Inc. and Ralph Thompson, President and Chief Brain of eBrains, Inc., provided additional insights from major business and community participants and VBN staff to identify current community strengths, weaknesses, challenges and resulting opportunities for long range success.
- **Individual meetings were also taken with senior community leadership** to gain directional information and recommendations.
- **The board of directors met to review and frame** other management and operational requirements, including review of the organizational mission, cascading objectives, and new governance opportunities.
- **Destination marketing industry trends** were reviewed and noted following review of the Organizational Profile Study of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) from the Destination Marketing Association International and their latest strategic planning *Futures Study*.
- **Finally, board and staff members provided their collective vision** for the new Visit Buffalo Niagara of the future.

As these sessions and inputs were provided, principal strategic opportunities were listed and prioritized followed by numerous others for future consideration. Major recommendations are noted throughout, and include manpower and financial resource requirements and suggested timelines for implementation when feasible.

Readers should consider this report an evolving process that will be modified and enhanced by VBN over the months and years ahead as plans are addressed and additional steps are taken to bring new initiatives to fruition. Following board review and approval of this plan and its recommendations, the staff can begin the task of determining scheduling and planning steps that support other planning needs and requirements.

Special Thanks to the Plan's Participants

Visit Buffalo Niagara Board of Directors

Dennis P. Murphy, VBN Board Chairman, President, InnVest Lodging Services, Inc.
Patrick J. Kaler, President & CEO, Visit Buffalo Niagara
Dottie Gallagher-Cohen, President & CEO, Buffalo Niagara Partnership
Randall Kramer, Artistic/Executive Director, MusicalFare Theatre
Kerry C. Mitchell, County-Appointed Representative
Minesh Patel, General Manager, Adam's Mark Buffalo
Edward A. Rath, III, Erie County Legislature
Mary F. Roberts, Executive Director, Martin House Restoration Corporation
James T. Sandoro, Executive Director, the Buffalo Transportation Pierce Arrow Museum
Paul Snyder III, CEO, Snyder Corp.
Maria Whyte, Commissioner, Department of Environment & Planning, County of Erie
Leslie H. Zemsky, Director of Fun, Larkin Square

Key community leadership meetings

County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz, County of Erie
Maria Whyte, Commissioner, Department of Environment & Planning, County of Erie
Dennis P. Murphy, VBN Board Chairman and President, InnVest Lodging Services, Inc.

Marketing Committee focus group

Jill Clark, Assistant Project Manager, Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation
Brittany Frey, Director of Marketing, Alliance Advisory Group
Dave Horesh, Regional Sales Manager, Block Club
Jennifer Kavanaugh, Director, Marketing & Communications, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise
Ben Kirst, Content Strategist, Quinlan and Company
Joe Lin-Hill, Deputy Director, Albright Knox Art Gallery
Andy Major, Vice President, Event Operations & Guest Experience, Buffalo Bills
Kathleen Rooney, PR Strategist/Publicist/Counselor, Kathleen Rooney Communications
Margaret Stehlik, Director of Operations, Martin House Restoration Corp.

Sports Commission focus group

Rick Aronberg, Head Swim Coach/STAR Swimming, Erie Community College
Brad Boyle, Natatorium Manager, Erie Community College
Mike Buczkowski, General Manager, Buffalo Bisons Baseball
Peter Jerebko, Director of Athletics, Erie Community College
John Lambert, Director of Development and Marketing, University at Buffalo
Thomas Marks, New York Director, GR8 Lakes Fishing Adventures
Bob Schell, USA Hockey, Northtown Center
Lisa Scherer, Manager/Operations, Ride for Roswell, Roswell Park Cancer Institute

Timm Slade, Executive Director, Section VI/NYSPHSAA
Chris Todorov, Events Manager, NFTA Boat Harbor

Suburban Hotel focus group

Philip Alterio, Director of Sales, Buffalo Niagara Marriott
Peter Florczak, General Manager, Buffalo Niagara Marriott
Rene Ganje, Director of Sales, Byblos Niagara Resort and Spa
Thomas Keane, Regional Director of Sales, Hart Hotels
Rudi Rainer, Owner, Super 8 Motel
Nicholas Salvatore, Director of Sales, Salvatore's Italian Gardens & Garden Place Hotel
Scott Swagler, General Manager, Byblos Niagara Resort and Spa

Downtown Hotels and Convention Center focus group

Mark Brown, Corporate Director of Sales and Marketing, Buffalo Lodging
Missy Byrne, Sales Manager, Embassy Suites Buffalo
Jay Dellavecchia, General Manager, Hyatt Regency Buffalo
Kelly Fox, Sales Manager, Adam's Mark Hotel
Julia Hay, Sales Manager, Adam's Mark Hotel
John Malkus, Director of Sales, Hyatt Regency Buffalo
Melissa Murphy, Director of Sales and Marketing, Buffalo Niagara Convention Center
Paul Murphy, Facility Director, Buffalo Niagara Convention Center
Matthew Spencer, General Manager, Comfort Suites Downtown

Visit Buffalo Niagara Senior Staff focus group

Patrick Kaler, President and CEO
David Marzo, Chief Financial Officer
Mike Even, Vice President of Sales and Services
Ed Healy, Vice President of Marketing
Cindy Kincaide, Director, Buffalo Ambassadors Program
Judy Smith, Director of Administration
Paul Murphy, Facility Director, Buffalo Niagara Convention Center
Pete Harvey, Director of Sports Development
Lori White, National Sales Manager
Karen Fashana, Marketing Manager

Plan Highlights: Major Findings and Opportunities

In 2013, operating with a staff of twenty-six and a budget of \$4.4 million dollars, Visit Buffalo Niagara's marketing initiatives produced an estimated \$181 million dollars in new visitor expenditures, including \$105 million from attendees at meetings, conventions, amateur athletic events and group tours, for the community—a return on marketing investment of approximately 40-to-1—one of the DMO industry's highest economic impact performance results.

As of July 2014, future bookings through the year 2018 from meetings, conventions, amateur athletic events and group tours will attract an estimated 87,000 attendees which is expected to generate in excess of \$ 92 million dollars in future economic impact for the region.

A major billion dollar era of development will occur in Buffalo in less than two years when a number of new capital improvements will be completed as this renaissance continues to generate increased enthusiasm for the community.

Utilizing the development taking place in Buffalo with the Medical Campus, HarborCenter and Canalside project and new hotel development, VBN has the opportunity to explore new niche markets such as medical tourism, expand existing amateur athletic sporting opportunities while exploring new strategies for domestic and international leisure visitation.

The challenge will be providing a Visit Buffalo Niagara marketing response that is capable of producing top of mind consumer awareness, which can achieve higher volumes of visitors and resulting economic benefits.

Buffalo Niagara requires a shared vision for tourism's emergence as an even more viable economic force through the new tourism initiative advanced by County executive Mark C. Poloncarz, "...to make Erie County the international tourism destination it should be."

The key factor for Buffalo Niagara in maximizing long term tourism success must be the ongoing spirit of community and stakeholder collaboration.

VBN should convene the Buffalo Niagara Tourism Summit, a special community forum featuring the national leaders of the most prestigious travel and tourism organizations to see first-hand the ongoing plans that will elevate Buffalo Niagara as a new destination of choice for future travel markets.

A New Tourism Master Planning process for Buffalo Niagara, including visitor readiness components such as way-finding and other signage, streetscapes, etc., should be integrated in future community master planning to foster this new era of opportunity for the community, its residents and visitors.

New research opportunities will produce a much-needed profile of Buffalo Niagara's leisure visitor market, and offer new convention and meeting opportunities, amateur sports

opportunities and expanding international in-bound markets that will optimize the VBN's ability to generate even higher incremental business returns for the future.

Developing Buffalo's tourism brand identity and brand promise for travelers will further differentiate the destination from other competitors through supportive community participation capable of achieving greater industry results.

Customer awareness and interest in the Buffalo Niagara tourism brand can best be attained through new travel journalist familiarization and other public relations/media publicity programs that support the entire Buffalo Niagara tourism business community.

The Profile of the Successful DMO

Destination Marketing Organization = DMO

This brief profile provides the principal attributes of the successful convention and visitors bureau, and assesses how Visit Buffalo Niagara emulates this model for excellence.

According to leading destination marketing experts, industry performance standards and findings from more than ninety consultant destination studies, there are basically three major areas or success criteria, which when taken collectively, provide generally recognized standards for evaluating today's successful DMO, also known today as a destination marketing organization.

Criterion I:

The DMO delivers performance of economic development benefits in fulfilling its core mission

First, DMO productivity results, or "economic impacts" from the performance marketing work of the DMO are based on the attraction of incremental visitors through various market segments, including meetings, conventions and amateur athletics. These results are:

- Quantifiable
- Forecast whenever feasible in advance as a series of goals
- Reportable to business leadership, stakeholders and other community constituents

Visit Buffalo Niagara exceeds the industry's performance model for delivering, monitoring, evaluating and reporting the significant performance productivity it delivers for the community. In 2013, VBN booked nearly 165,000 room nights, through 443 meetings/conventions, sporting events and group tours. In the same year, the VBN website had over 1.3 million unique visitors.

Criterion II:

The DMO provides marketing, management and operational excellence through its financial oversight, market research and market planning, business execution and evaluation steps.

As such, VBN strives to deliver the highest standards of performance in the areas of

- Economic impact results against market segments
- Successfully planned, designed and executed marketing initiatives and a business standard marketing plan
- Reporting and accountability systems
- Long and short-term planning
- Performance goal-setting, tracking and delivery

- Staff and program performance evaluation, professional staff development and employee compensation and recognition
- Community partnership and alliance-building to galvanize tourism industry interests, stretch resources and leverage success.

This is the core work of the successful DMO under the direction of the/President, and the most well regarded employ best business practice standards in their management systems.

In this regard, Visit Buffalo Niagara emulates this criterion through its best business practices, its models for long and short range business planning and the quantifiable and qualitative matrix of innovative program results it delivers on behalf of Buffalo. However, while performance success has been stellar and exceeds the results of most DMOs, there are current needs to ameliorate mistaken stakeholder perceptions regarding the value of the organization and the substantial benefits it achieves.

Criterion III:

The DMO is the recognized leader in the community for effective tourism development

On the surface, this last criterion may appear to be extremely subjective. However, the DMO's assessment should be impartially made by asking all of its diverse stakeholders to address and evaluate their relationships with the agency.

Today's DMO should be well regarded for its local leadership position. Stakeholders (i.e. hotels, attractions, art and cultural institutions, related businesses and other associations, government, etc.) should look to the DMO as the focal point for destination marketing, strategic tourism planning, coordinating community stakeholder efforts, research and long range visioning.

In other words, through leadership of the Board of Directors and the CEO, the DMO's role is that of the voice of the industry, the inspiration, the visionary, the chief lobbying organization and the chief cheerleading organization. DMO board leadership should assist in closely monitoring and managing key long range strategic planning issues affecting the destination such as the need for competitive market funding, infrastructure requirements, branding, visitor amenities and service issues.

Through its ongoing strategic planning programs and constituent input, Visit Buffalo Niagara continues to nurture its ongoing relationships with government and industry; the new leadership of the President/CEO has been recognized and welcomed by the business community. Utilizing the President/CEO's vast industry and educational background and leadership within national tourism associations, VBN is recognized as a leader locally, regionally and nationally. The board of directors and CEO should rely on these strengths to continue building positive relations with County and City government and the local tourism industry as the destination continues its renaissance over the next five years through industry meetings, community

presentations and panel participation, visitor readiness, customer service and front line training, newsletters and communications, etc.

Reviewing Buffalo Niagara's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges

A series of six focus groups attended by key leaders were held during the week of May 12, 2014.

Individual sessions included the VBN board of directors, sports commission, the VBN marketing committee, downtown hotels/convention center participants, suburban hotels and VBN senior staff. Each session employed a traditional SWOC assessment process as stakeholders provided their perceptions regarding community strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. Individual meetings with senior community leadership provided additional insights. Then the inputs from each session were incorporated in this collective listing, offering current observations about Buffalo Niagara's tourism industry.

STRENGTHS

Buffalo's community and VBN strengths are multi-faceted, fueled by optimism and a shared vision for a productive and bright future. Comments from the focus groups include:

- Buffalo Niagara is the recipient of recent national accolades as a top destination for international visitors, one of America's five underrated cities, a top turnaround town and one of the *New York Times* "44 Places to Go".
- Tourism leaders concur that if a traveler hasn't been to Buffalo recently, they haven't really been to Buffalo. This is because the community's tourism personality has rapidly emerged in such positive ways, with bustling new restaurants, a high density of artistic and cultural amenities including one of the world's best art collections, sports, special events and now hundreds of millions of dollars in new development projects culminating in 2016. Buffalo has become a truly genuine and authentic destination.
- This new billion dollar renaissance approaching includes ongoing reinvigoration of Buffalo's Inner Harbor and the Erie Canal park projects that will transform the waterfront, new hotels, indoor and outdoor ice rinks, new school, hospital and business facilities plus added retail, restaurants, and office space.
- This phoenix-like development can also be Buffalo's greatest catalyst for new economic growth through tourism.
- Resultantly, there is a growing optimism from residents that the community is becoming more energized, more invigorated and capable of great things.
- For first-time visitors, Buffalo is a major surprise, with the city out-delivering against initial consumer expectations.
- Visit Buffalo Niagara has achieved high levels of performance through its skilled and tenured staff—highlighted by social media and digital marketing that is among the top programs in the industry.

- Government and industry understand that the business of tourism marketing is working for the community, producing resulting economic impact results that benefit everyone.
- When convention meeting planners, travel writers and group tour planners come and experience Buffalo through the work of the VBN, there is positive reinforcement for the community's ability to host higher future volumes of visitors that provide a vital engine of economic development through tourism expenditures, resulting tax revenue and local jobs generated by increased visitor spending.
- The nearby natural wonder and tourism magnet of Niagara Falls, along with two major Great Lakes highlight our waterfront assets and favorable location to Canada, and proximity to Toronto and Southern Ontario.
- Other strengths are the sports venues such as the Northtown Center, and Lake Erie and the Niagara River as some of the top fisheries in the country.
- Being on the border of Canada provides Buffalo an international context and distinction not shared by many.
- Buffalo combines the old and the new through its architecture, rich history and opportunities for new development, including a great diversity of visitor amenities and trip purposes; shopping, professional and amateur sports, conferences and meetings, culture, arts and special events for the leisure market.
- Because Buffalo residents are friendly and passionate about their community, they make great ambassadors when welcoming visitors and their base for volunteerism is strong.
- Communication between the Sports Commission and the VBN are strong and supportive, providing ongoing opportunities for leveraging resources and programs
- Higher educational opportunities are here in abundance, with an estimated 125,000 college students.
- A convenient location and ease of accessibility, Buffalo is easy to get around. Once you're here, everything is just minutes away.
- The quality of life is high, including a great mix and diversity of sports, culture, arts.
- Buffalo is an affordable destination, providing a great cost/value relationship for visitors.
- Offering four seasons of special things to see and do, and highlighted by special events year-round.
- Easy to get passport (same day)
- Buffalo has developed a cool vibe that younger visitors connect with.
- The restaurant scene is unique and special, and its owners have a deep passion and love for what they do.
- Travel is enriched in the community due to the collaborative relationships between the community, suppliers, and vendors.

WEAKNESSES

The weaknesses that impede successful progress for Buffalo Niagara were noted:

- The VBN has been underfunded for marketing for more than a decade, making it difficult to effectively compete in the tourism marketplace against a growing list of successful competitive destinations.
- As a result, there is relatively low top of mind consumer awareness of Buffalo's visitor amenities; its facilities and services that make it such a special visitor destination. It is this missing first step of visitor *awareness* that must be expanded in order to lead to customer *interest* and *desire* to final *action* that generates new visitors.
- The Convention Center is one of America's oldest and outdated, making it a liability in attracting meetings, conventions and other business. Nearby boarded up buildings are a deterrent as well the general condition of downtown—with limited retail, restaurant hours on the weekend are not ideal, Main Place Mall and back of Statler are sore spots.
- Airport – limited direct flights beyond east coast destinations, and mostly on regional jet service, including no nonstop service to Albany.
- The hotel package is far from ideal for meetings and conventions, with groups having to use 3, 4+ hotels.
- Weather perceptions are a major deterrent to visitation.
- There are also out of date but lingering media stereotypes to overcome in portraying the city's vitality and reputation as an emerging new visitor product.
- A lack of downtown retail.
- Distance from vibrant neighborhoods to hotels is an impediment.
- Hotel conditions / quality.
- The lack of adequate local navigational way-finding signage that could brand the community through the diversity of its facilities and amenities.
- Local media that points out the negatives more than the positive stories because that's what makes the news.
- Lack of public transit.
- Community planning is missing for cross-promotion of visitor assets.
- A general deficiency in master planning, particularly in tourism development.
- From a college perspective, it is tough to show students what there is to do in the city, there is a lack of awareness and a poor image of what facilities are here, and what kind of impact they have.
- Lack of media appreciation for amateur sports and their positive impact, nor is there a full understanding of area and their capabilities.
- There are funding issues: it is tough to keep existing facilities we have up to date and competitive due to lack of budget to do so.

- Difficulty competing with the budgets of larger sports organizations such as the Bills and Sabres.
- Lack of integrated indoor facilities with ability to travel under roof and compete during the cold seasons as other competitors.
- A lack of ice to host indoor and outdoor events such as skating and pond hockey. Limited funding for event solicitation compared to other competing communities who have major budgets to buy events.
- The confusing permitting process should be streamlined. There are issues between certain venues and the city/government, many duplicate applications required for customers that makes the process redundant. Nor is there clarity about which group should govern which space.

CHALLENGES

The challenges or impediments affecting the community and VBN were then listed:

- Leadership – Determining what role Government (State, County and City) plays in tourism development and marketing.
- There is general Buffalo pessimism among older residents.
- Aging facilities/venues/convention center with lack of capital improvement plans.
- Keeping young people here post-college is problematic.
- Money continues to move to the suburbs.
- Lingering suburban concerns and fears about visiting Buffalo.
- Overcoming old misperceptions and cynicism that Buffalo isn't a viable visitor destination requires diligence in marketing and communications.
- Some community unwillingness to embrace the positive change.
- Lack of local awareness of new positive developments here today and the visitor experience now provided by Buffalo.
- Creating effective public/private partnerships.



Stakeholders' Survey

Summary overview, results and themes



MANAGING for SUCCESS!

Performance-Solutions-Group, LLC
1127 High Ridge Road, #266, Stamford CT 06905

May 2014

Survey Overview

Performance-Solutions-Group, Inc. conducted a stakeholder perception survey with participants requested to provide frank and objective feedback about the way in which Visit Buffalo Niagara is serving them as stakeholders.

❑ **Survey Objectives:**

- To obtain essential feedback and input from stakeholders to guide the decision-making of the Visit Buffalo Niagara leadership team and Board;
- To identify issues and problems that need to be addressed
- To send a message to stakeholders that their opinions are valued

❑ **Rating Scale:**

We used a 1 - 5 scale to rate the statements made in the survey. The rating system used was as follows:

5	Exceptional
4	Exceeds expectations
3	Meets expectations
2	Below expectations
1	Failing

Based on input from the many surveys we have conducted, the following guidelines provide a frame of reference for interpreting the results:

> 4.6	Exceptional
4.4 – 4.6	Excellent
4.0 – 4.3	Strong
3.5 – 3.9	Satisfactory
3.0 – 3.4	Less than satisfactory
2.5 – 2.9	Weak
< 2.5	Some serious problems
N/A	Score not shown since less than three datapoints

❑ **Response Rate:**

- Approximately 803 individuals were invited to participate in the survey.
- There were 98 responses.
- This represents a response rate of approximately 12%. This is a little disappointing in relation to a more typical response rate of +- 20% and as high as 25%.

Nevertheless, a response of 98 is a valid sample and the scores show a high level of consistency across the various groups. Responses by type of business were as follows:

Primary Business	Combined Total	Hotel (full service)	Hotel (limited service)	Arts & Culture	Attractions	Entertainment	Restaurants	Local Associations	Others
<i>Number of Respondents</i>	98	16	7	20	12	3	5	5	30

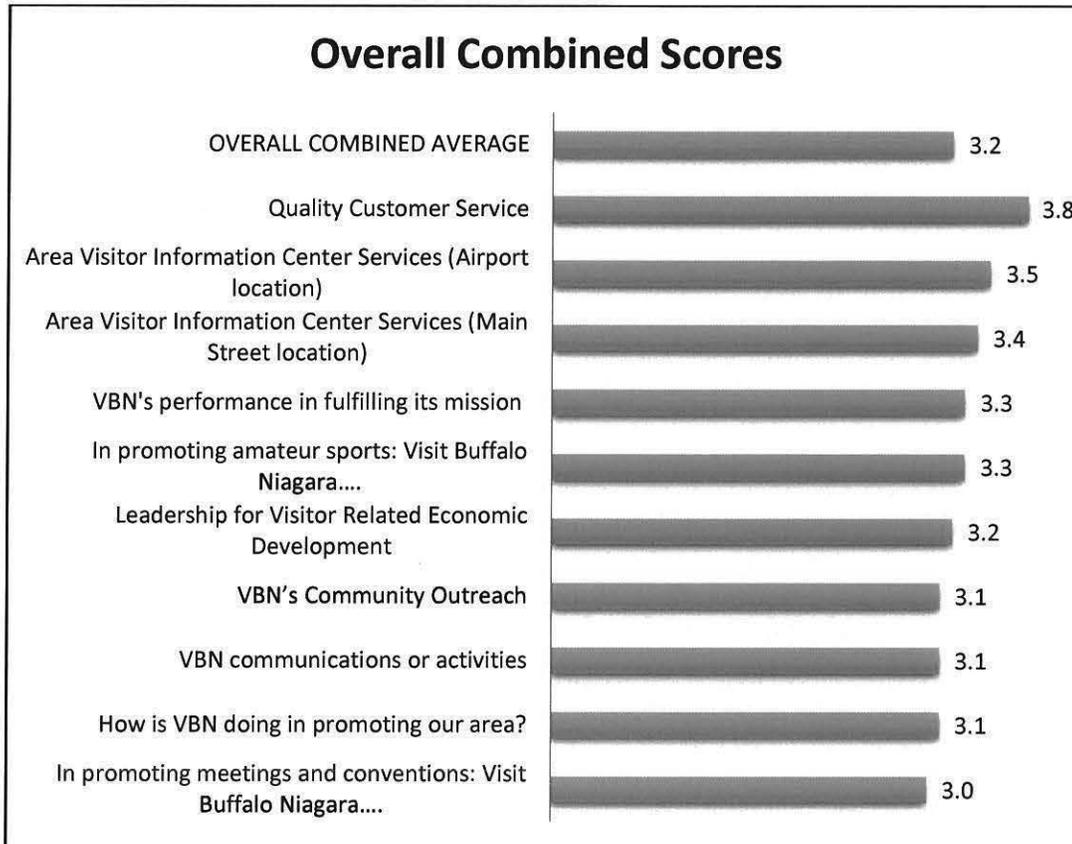
Notes:

- **Eleven** of the ninety-eight respondents were board members.
- The "Other" column is comprised of responses from a wide range of sectors but with insufficient datapoints for each to warrant separate identification in the reported data. Refer Appendix 1 for the listing of business sector responding.

The responses broken out by location were as follows:

Location	Combined Total	Downtown	Other
<i>Number of Respondents</i>	98	45	53

□ **Summary Results by Category:**



Summary Results and Themes

Table 1 – Summary by Primary Business

Category	Comb	Hotel (full service)	Hotel (limited service)	Arts & Culture	Attractions	Entertainment	Restaurants	Local Assns.	Other	Board
Number of Responses	98	16	7	20	12	3	5	5	30	11
Quality Customer Service	3.8	3.5	4.1	3.7	3.8	4.4	4.4	3.8	3.9	4.1
Area Visitor Information Center Services (Airport location)	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.3	3.3	4.2	3.4	3.4	3.9
Area Visitor Information Center Services (Main Street location)	3.4	3.4	4.1	3.4	3.0	3.7	4.0	3.3	3.3	3.3
VBN's performance in fulfilling its mission	3.3	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.6
In promoting amateur sports: Visit Buffalo Niagara....	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.5	3.5	2.9	4.1	3.4	3.6
Leadership for Visitor Related Economic Development	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.5	3.1	3.0	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.4
VBN's Community Outreach	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.2	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.6	3.2	3.6
VBN communications or activities	3.1	2.8	3.3	3.1	3.0	3.2	3.6	3.3	3.2	3.5
How is VBN doing in promoting our area?	3.1	2.8	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.6	3.2	3.4
In promoting meetings and conventions: Visit Buffalo Niagara....	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.9	3.2	3.0	2.8	3.4	3.1	3.4
Overall Combined Average	3.2	3.0	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.5
Overall Satisfaction with Visit Buffalo Niagara (One line rating)	3.3	2.9	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.0	3.3	4.0	3.4	3.8

Importance of publications and website	3.4	3.3	3.6	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.7	3.7
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□ **Comments on Summary Results (Table 1):**

- The overall combined average is 3.2, just below midway in the unsatisfactory range.
- The score of 3.5 from the eleven board members is at the start of the satisfactory range.
- The line item score for Overall Satisfaction with Visit Buffalo Niagara (VBN), a single line rating, is marginally higher than the Overall Combined Average. However, there are some major disconnects within the sectors identified, including the board score for overall satisfaction at 3.8 versus the board overall average of 3.5.
- Quality of Customer Service is the highest scoring category at a high 3.8, just above midway in the satisfactory range, followed by Area Visitor Information Center Services (Airport) at 3.5, the bottom of the satisfactory range.
- The lowest category score is low at 3.0 (Bottom of unsatisfactory range) for promoting meetings and conventions:
- The next lowest category scores are identical for three of them:
 - VBN's Community Outreach
 - VBN communications or activities
 - How VBN is doing in promoting our area?
- Local Associations score the VBN highest at 3.6, in the lower portion of the satisfactory range, followed by Hotels (limited service) at 3.4. Other sector scores are clustered from 3.2 to 3.3.
- Highest line item scores are shown in the table below. It is concerning that only one score is in the strong category at 4.0 and that there are few scores higher than 3.5, the bottom of the satisfactory range. It is noteworthy that most relate to the quality of customer service, the highest scoring category.

Table 2: Highest Scores by Line Item	Comb	Hotel (full service)	Hotel (limited service)	Arts & Culture	Attractions	Entertainment	Restaurants	Local Assns.	Other	Board
Quality Customer Service: Courtesy	4.0	3.8	4.1	3.7	4.0	N/A	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.4
Quality Customer Service: Overall Customer Service	3.9	3.6	4.1	3.7	3.9	N/A	4.3	3.8	4.0	4.3
Quality Customer Service: Knowledge	3.8	3.6	4.1	3.6	3.8	N/A	4.5	3.8	3.8	4.0
Area Visitor Information Center Services (Main Street location) Professionalism of staff	3.8	3.9	4.4	3.8	3.4	4.0	4.5	3.8	3.7	3.7
Quality Customer Service: Accuracy	3.8	3.4	4.1	3.6	3.8	N/A	4.5	3.8	3.8	3.9
Table 2: Highest Scores by Line Item Continued	Comb	Hotel (full service)	Hotel (limited service)	Arts & Culture	Attractions	Entertainment	Restaurants	Local Assns.	Other	Board
Area Visitor Information Center Services (Main Street location)	3.8	3.8	4.4	3.7	3.1	4.3	4.5	3.8	3.6	3.7

Quality of customer service										
Quality Customer Service: Timeliness in response	3.7	3.2	4.1	3.7	3.4	N/A	4.5	3.8	3.7	3.9
Is effective in bringing amateur sports to our area	3.7	3.2	3.7	3.7	4.0	3.7	3.2	4.3	3.8	3.9
Importance of Area Visitors Guide	3.6	3.3	3.7	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.9

- There were many combined scores in the unsatisfactory and weak ranges. The lowest scores are shown in the table below. The lowest scores in the weak range are substantiated by many of the comments from respondents and reflected in the survey themes in the full report. Some of the weakest scores are from Hotels.

Table 3: Lowest Scores by Line Item	Comb	Hotel (full service)	Hotel (limited service)	Arts & Culture	Attractions	Entertainment	Restaurants	Local Assns.	Other	Board
Has the appropriate facilities to attract meeting and convention (M&C) business	2.4	2.3	1.8	2.5	2.7	N/A	2.4	2.0	2.4	2.5
Promoting packaged vacations	2.6	2.2	2.6	2.5	2.7	3.0	2.8	N/A	2.9	2.8
Area Visitor Information Center Services (Main Street location) Suitability of location	2.7	2.7	3.6	2.7	2.5	2.7	3.3	2.5	2.4	2.4
Staff visits to your business	2.8	2.5	2.4	2.7	2.5	3.3	2.7	3.3	3.1	3.0
Marketing and promoting the region to international individual travelers	2.8	2.6	3.2	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.5	N/A	2.9	3.0
Marketing and promoting the region to overseas inbound groups	2.8	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.5	N/A	2.7	3.0
Convention calendar	2.8	2.4	3.1	2.8	2.9	N/A	3.3	3.0	2.9	3.1
Helping to create jobs	2.9	2.6	2.9	2.9	2.6	3.0	3.0	3.4	3.0	3.3

Table 3: Lowest Scores by Line Item Continued	Comb	Hotel (full service)	Hotel (limited service)	Arts & Culture	Attractions	Entertainment	Restaurants	Local Assns.	Other	Board
Developing opportunities for cooperative marketing and advertising with partners	2.9	2.4	3.0	2.6	3.0	3.7	2.8	N/A	3.1	3.2
Through paid advertising in magazines, newspapers and TV	2.9	2.3	3.2	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.8	N/A	3.0	3.2
Seeking out and attracting new visitor markets	2.9	2.4	3.1	2.9	2.8	N/A	2.3	3.3	3.2	3.1
Extending visitor stays through Visitor Information Centers	2.9	2.9	3.2	3.0	2.9	N/A	3.0	3.8	2.7	3.4
Participation in roundtables and other problem-solving forums	3.0	2.7	2.8	3.1	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.8	3.1	3.6
Creates business opportunities for the tourism industry by bringing meetings and conventions to the area	3.0	2.8	2.7	2.9	3.3	N/A	2.8	3.3	3.2	3.5
Partners effectively with attractions in providing additional activities for attendees	3.0	2.9	3.2	2.8	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.7	3.2	3.5
Partners effectively with the tourism industry in serving meeting planners	3.0	2.7	3.0	2.9	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.1	3.6
Works effectively with the hotel community in developing M&C business	3.0	2.7	3.2	3.1	3.3	N/A	2.8	3.7	3.1	3.3

□ **Positive Themes and Comments:**

Many of the comments in response to the open-ended questions and following each of the categories were thoughtful and constructive and merit consideration.

- In response to the question: Is the VBN recognized as the leader of the area's visitor industry? Out of the 60 responses, 45 responded yes, 8 gave No answers and 7 were unclear or unsure.
- Examples of positive comments are:
 - VBN does an excellent job with the limited resources that it has. Many of their issues are tied to funding -or- more accurately the lack of proper public and private sector financial support.
 - Considering budget constraints, outstanding results.
 - VBN has demonstrated a strong commitment, and a viable effort towards attracting visitors.
 - One of VBN's greatest contributions in recent years has been its consistently excellent graphic/visual presence.
 - VBN does a very good job with attracting and servicing sporting events to the area.
 - A great team.
 - Outstanding staff.
 - Cyndi Kincaide, Karen Cox, and Tracey Martell....all outstanding!
 - A great group of people that know a LOT about WNY!!
- The staff members at the downtown visitor information center are competent.
- The VBN does a great job with their partners and groups coming in.

□ **Comments of Concern:**

There were clear negative themes with regard to the following.

- **Difficulties in attracting conventions with the current facility and hotel capacity:**
 - Not enough hotel room capacity for large conventions and conferences.
 - The hotel and conference facilities are inadequate to host a conference of 800 or more attendees, and the city is not considered a draw.
 - A smaller convention center allows only one major event in the building at a time, limits conventions due to local trade shows in the building.
 - The convention center is outdated and undersized.
 - We could attract bigger and better conventions with a newer Convention Center.
- **Lack of communication to stakeholders:**
 - Better communication is needed to let the community know what VBN is doing.
 - It is important for more communication and the need for more information shared on a regular basis.
 - Communicating the impact VBN has on the local economy is important and is lacking.
 - The great work most often goes unnoticed except for Board members close to operations.
- **Need to improve marketing and promotional activities:**
 - The VBN needs to promote businesses/attractions outside of Erie County more effectively. Get people to stay another day.
 - There appears to be little promotion of area attractions to out-of-town visitors.
 - There is limited visibility in the region.
 - The perception problem requires marketing, branding and content.
 - The budget for this is too low.
 - The negative perceptions of Buffalo need to be addressed.
 - There is an undue focus on attracting Canadian visitors.
- **More impact needed on local business:**
 - Not enough is done to promote local cooperation and planning to capitalize on visitor events.
 - Some see limited evidence of VBN's efforts impacting local business. "If they were to go away today, I doubt it would be noticed."
- **Inadequate website:**
 - The website is complicated and lacks consistent updates and relevant information regarding organizations and events. "Frankly, it's a boring site that lacks accessibility."
 - The website needs to be user friendly and up to date.

- Younger ideas are needed for fresh insights into use of technology and social media.
- **Insufficient funding:**
 - More funding is required to enable the VBN to provide quality services and be an economic stimulus for the region.
 - "VBN needs more funding, which we fully support, to become exceptional in all areas."
 - More communication is required to increase the level of public education, outreach, and awareness, necessary to obtain support for increased public funding.
 - "Funding, funding, funding."
- **Visitor information center issues:**
 - The information center is in wrong location.
 - "No visitors here except if lost; location is still in a dead part of downtown."
 - The location needs to be visible to visitors unfamiliar with the downtown area.
 - The location needs to be in an area where visitors spend time when downtown in the City.
 - The information center at the airport is difficult to find and may be in the wrong area with poor signage.

MAJOR OPPORTUNITIES

Eighteen priority opportunities, which comprise the center piece of this plan, are recommended in detail, followed by a general listing of additional issues for ongoing discussion and future consideration.

Industry Relations: Reporting and Accountability

1. Strengthen tourism partnerships and resulting collaboration by implementing a comprehensive, ongoing industry relations/partnership initiative that corrects misperceptions regarding VBN performance and other issues from the stakeholder survey.

While the VBN staff has worked effectively to produce extremely high levels of annual performance productivity for the community, low scores in the stakeholders survey support the conclusion that there are major challenges in effectively communicating the DMO's role in fulfilment of its mission as a significant engine of economic development and promoting the area amidst pockets of misunderstandings that require immediate attention and amelioration.

Throughout America's corporate business community, where shareholders drive the future, the public relations/public affairs function has been appropriately elevated to a senior management role, and this responsibility should be an important requisite for the VBN as well. In fact, this public relations, or public affairs function should be everybody's job—from the entry-level position to the President/CEO.

Recommendation: The responsibility for public affairs should be included as a personal performance objective for the President and all senior staff, with day to day functional responsibilities assigned to a senior staff member who reports directly to the CEO. With a new CEO, the opportunity for a new public affairs/industry relations plan is present and should be developed and implemented.

Industry relations development

The objective should be development of an ongoing industry relations plan to foster productive communication, understanding, good will, support and when feasible, participation in tourism as a significant social and economic program for the community, through the mission of the VBN.

The plan should be developed in the spirit of industry and stakeholder collaboration. It should focus on the four principal publics of stakeholder, local media, government and industry relations, with the first priority being stakeholder relations.

Stakeholder relations: priority tasks

1. The initial task should be the assignment of the senior staff as a stakeholder relations task force, to review the entire stakeholder survey, and then plan communications and program responses to effectively address and ameliorate all current misunderstandings.
2. Following development of the senior staff's recommended plan and its detailed components and timelines, the task force should review their conclusions with the entire VBN staff for additional input.
3. The next step should be senior staff review with the President.
4. CEO would present the plan to the board for implementation, which should later become an integral part of the annual marketing plan.

Opportunities to be considered should include

- **The introduction of new business communications messaging** regarding the VBN mission, its objectives, its marketing process, the value of its work and ongoing results, along with new market data that is useful for stakeholders such as visitor market studies, etc. Also review other competitive internal publications, including newsletters.
- **An ongoing series of roundtables** by major business segments (hotel sales/marketing, tourism marketing, sports, PR, visitor service, etc.), for monthly or quarterly community discussion, planning, and the leveraging of collaborative resources.
- **New or expanded collaborative opportunities** for development of the annual marketing plan, the next strategic plan, team-sell opportunities and the hosting of major writers, tour operators and meeting planners who can drive new business to Buffalo Niagara.
- **Begin VBN's tracking and valuing** of monthly and annual in-kind program services provided by stakeholders, including room nights for meeting planners and writers, team sell participation, restaurant service support for clients, etc.

Next, the staff person responsible for the development of ongoing public affairs should continue development of the following programs and follow the same implementation outline for staff input, the approval of the President and the board.

Local media relations—objective: Produce and instill favorable impressions for tourism and its contributions to the health and wellbeing of Buffalo and its residents with ongoing positive and pro-active media relationships and messages by

- Cementing good will and mutual respect by meeting with editorial boards of publications at least annually, presenting positive information, backgrounders, industry trends, etc.
- Focusing on National Tourism Week as a major hook for information-sharing on the friends and relatives market, where local residents can invite their guests to enjoy the excitement of the new Buffalo Niagara.

Government relations—objective: Focus on tourism's viable ability to drive the economy

through the successful generation and sustaining of local jobs, and the substantial local tax revenue contributed by visitors that support the local economy and reduce the burden from residents, along with providing local social amenities and services, which visitors help support.

After Industry Relations completes its plan implementation, results should be evaluated by the annual tracking and reporting of stakeholder in-kind services and their manpower and financial resource value, along with the number of collaborative programs and participating stakeholders. It is also recommended that the stakeholder assessment survey be repeated in two years due to its current low scores.

2. Support the recommended industry relations program with key messages that effectively communicate the enhanced mission of VBN, its successful performance value, new objectives and the organization’s strategic marketing process.

The Mission

The current Mission Statement of the DMO is:

“Visit Buffalo Niagara sells and markets our assets and attractions to visitors outside the Buffalo Niagara region as a convention, tourism and leisure destination for the economic benefit of the community.”

Other considerations include these observations:

The primary function of a DMO/destination marketing organization (DMO) is marketing: determining customer needs and then filling them through an integrated program of tactics and strategic initiatives. “Sales” is merely one of many delivery programs as are others not mentioned in the mission, including advertising, PR, Internet development, the website, collateral development, etc. Thus, sales should not be included either.

“Marketing outside the region” is a strategy and should be removed from the mission and later incorporated in a VBN marketing process that follows.

Mission statements for DMOs should not only state the foundational purpose of the organization, but also *who they are and what they provide to their communities*, such as:

- Visit Buffalo Niagara is the official destination marketing organization for the community
- Through a public/private partnership, it enhances the economic prosperity of Buffalo Niagara, its businesses and residents
- It is responsible for attracting additional or incremental visitation and resulting benefits for the community
- Once VBN receives its DMAI accreditation, this designation could be incorporated to demonstrate industry best practices

Thus, it is recommended that a new mission statement be developed by VBN that reflects the current state of the tourism industry and economy, and the emerging renaissance of the destination’s tourism product and corporate culture by the end of FY2014.

The Value Statement

Measuring and reporting the collective, quantitative performance productivity returns from the VBN's ongoing marketing programs in a brief value statement is the quickest most effective method of communicating to stakeholders the organization's value in fulfilling its mission.

For example, the latest annual results from meetings, conventions, amateur athletics and group tour bookings yielded an estimated economic impact of approximately \$105 million dollars. Leisure visitor impacts generated from advertising, web marketing and social media marketing resulted in \$75 million dollars. Media publicity value of positive press coverage for Erie County tourism equated to nearly \$1 million dollars. Collectively these three sales and marketing initiatives totaled \$180 million dollars in annual visitor spending. These numbers, supported by extensive analyses, can then be totaled to provide the following annual value statement, including a return on marketing investment of 40-to-1.

In 2013, Visit Buffalo Niagara, operating with a staff of 26 people and a budget of nearly \$ 4.4 million dollars, produced an estimated \$ 181 million dollars in new visitor expenditures, including \$ 105 million from the over 139,000 attendees at meetings, conventions amateur athletic events and group tours. These activities generated nearly \$ 17 million dollars in tax revenues from visitors and conference delegates that visited the region.

Additionally, staff-generated out of town media publicity with an approximate value of \$ 1 million dollars reached 174 million potential visitors who are now considering Buffalo Niagara for future visits. Therefore on behalf of the County of Erie and its tourism stakeholders, Visit Buffalo Niagara delivered a 40-to-1 return on the investment of marketing dollars made in Visit Buffalo Niagara.

This value statement provides an extremely productive and powerful response to the DMO's mission statement in clarifying its quantifiable dollar performance accountability and major business benefits for the city and its stakeholders.

Of great significance, this value statement delivers one of the DMO industry's strongest economic value statements for superlative performance. Yet it is only the tip of the iceberg in marketing value to the community, and doesn't address many other important aspects of its qualitative achievements including branding, center management, and business partnerships.

This value statement should be most often prominently communicated immediately following the mission statement and in response to it in all appropriate DMO publications including the annual marketing plan and ongoing stakeholder reports.

The Marketing Process

Also recommended is this new VBN Strategic Marketing Process, which communicates the necessary strategic requirements for successfully delivering the mission:

Visit Buffalo Niagara follows the best industry practice of producing quantifiable, goal based economic results:

- Through a market-driven, customer-focused, research-based and brand-oriented business approach.
- Concentrating on traditional visitor market segments (highlighted by leisure, meetings/conventions and sports) and geographic proximity to psychographic and demographic markets that yield optimal results.
- Primarily attracting overnight guests, which provide the greatest economic returns for Buffalo compared to the day trip or local market.

Core Objectives

These seven broad-based core marketing objectives cascade from the mission statement and are intended to fully clarify and support the parameters of all the ongoing work of Visit Buffalo Niagara.

1. **Generate positive awareness of Buffalo Niagara as a destination of choice for travelers.** (This objective deals with developing brand awareness as an initial step in the marketing process and may include programs such as public travel shows, billboards, and media publicity).
2. **Stimulate interest and desire on the part of consumers to take action and visit.** (This second marketing objective may include advertising, media publicity, web development, direct sales, collateral, etc.).
3. **Maximize the length and frequency of stay throughout the year to increase economic generation and enhance the value of the visitor's experience.** (Visitor center services, kiosks, sales training and product development applications are important strategies under this objective).
4. **Increase the business volume of tourism business partners and constituents.** (Stakeholder partnership programs are addressed under this objective).
5. **Proactively provide recommendations, support or deliver development of additional tourism products and services to enhance the visitor experience.** (Public advocacy, including infrastructure considerations are fulfilled with this objective).
6. **Maintain a research base for the community's tourism industry.** (Market and marketing research, such as economic impact studies, visitor profile studies, stakeholder assessments and other customer studies are potential components).
7. **Create positive awareness, support and participation for the DMO** (A comprehensive stakeholder and community relations plan, including partnership collaboration opportunities, are among programs included under this objective).

All future plans—including a strategic plan, an industry standard annual marketing plan, and individual staff performance objectives—should flow from the mission statement, the strategic marketing process and these broad-based DMO objectives. And all three should be consistently announced in planning documents including future marketing and business plans.

For future marketing plan development, each objective can be carried out by a series of strategies, followed by specific work programs or tactics that can be modified over time, based on changing market conditions, available budgets and other evolving needs.

Recommendation: the board should review and consider approval for all of the above. In addition, new communications messages should be developed as needed, along with questions and answers that may appear in stakeholder newsletters and other collateral.

Delivering long term performance success

3. Visit Buffalo Niagara’s Board of Directors should officially endorse the planned initiative from County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz “to make Erie County the international tourism destination it should be.”

To support the process (see the Executive’s June 2013 report, *Initiatives for a Smart Economy*), VBN should commission a white paper that discusses the emerging opportunity for tourism as a major engine of social and economic development for Buffalo and Erie County.

This white paper should chronicle and validate the rapid rise of Buffalo Niagara tourism through more than an anticipated billion dollars in new performance productivity from the VBN during the next five years. It will also convincingly illustrate how the industry can dramatically further increase new tourism income for the community, along with new job creation and additional taxable resources through a traditional funding mechanism for tourism marketing that is now building market share for scores of other destination competitors at Buffalo’s expense.

4. VBN should also support the County Executive's proposal to establish a VBN Funding Advisory Board. As the official tourism marketing organization for the destination, VBN should play an active role in the Funding Advisory Board.

The County has said in *Initiatives for a Smart Economy* that there is a need to explore mechanisms for increasing and stabilizing funding for VBN as county funding for VBN has been somewhat unstable and static for nearly a decade. The County Executive will appoint members to serve on the Board, which will be comprised of county staff, business leaders, hoteliers, representatives from local foundations, the labor community, and others. VBN should support the Board in any way necessary, including providing research on: 1) funding levels and models among peer cities; 2) hotel forecasting for the region; 3) the impact of static revenue during the last decade; and 4) tourism market trends and forecasts. VBN should also present all recommendations made by the Funding Advisory Board to the VBN Board for consideration and potential adoption.

5. VBN should continue to support and play a role in the County Executive's proposal to conduct a feasibility study for a new downtown convention center.

Prior to initial planning, the VBN should develop an in-house market analysis to determine the potentials for Buffalo Niagara's most lucrative market segments. Should the building be designed to accommodate traditional meetings and conferences as is currently recommended, or is there an even greater opportunity for a hybrid venue that can also accommodate the burgeoning amateur sports market for Buffalo as well as other intended uses?

A supportive analysis from the VBN should focus on annual lost meetings business to further clarify new future opportunities. For background, Visit Buffalo Niagara currently produces industry standard, in-house lost business meeting reports as a method for determining the reasons why a particular meeting or convention has not selected the community for their future business. By further modifying this report, the staff can quickly determine, on an ongoing basis:

- The primary reasons Buffalo may consistently lose business to other communities
- To whom do we lose it?
- Are there major competitors who consistently win out against us?
- What are the reasons for our competitor's success and for our resulting failure to achieve these bookings?

VBN can convert these reports into a powerful marketing tool by taking all individual lost business reports throughout the year and combining the findings in one comprehensive annual analysis. Staff can then quickly determine, on a percentage basis, the primary reasons for Buffalo's losses-- and then guide staff in planning a marketing response to address these competitive issues.

If hotel housing or center condition/size is a liability, the report may serve as a useful feasibility study resource in support of new building enhancements/inventory. If hotel pricing is a dilemma, this challenge can be reviewed with accommodations partners. If the same competitive cities consistently win out against Buffalo's ongoing efforts, staff should undertake a detailed competitive set analysis of these destinations by comparing the following in the latest DMAI organizational profile of DMOs:

- DMO budget and staffing, field offices, sales initiatives deployed
- Special marketing programs and considerations for convention development
- Infrastructure advantages (convention center, ballroom, location, other facilities)
- Financial package support

6. With the billion dollar 2016 Buffalo renaissance approaching, VBN should convene the *Buffalo Niagara Tourism Summit*, a special community forum featuring the national leaders of the most prestigious travel and tourism organizations to see first-hand the ongoing plans that will elevate Buffalo Niagara as a new destination of choice for future travel markets.

The 2016 billion dollar community renaissance should serve as a strong catalyst for jump-starting a new generation of collaborative optimism for Buffalo as the city's good news is shared with invited leaders of national and regional tourism industry intermediaries—travel writers, meeting planners and tour operators--to come and experience the New Buffalo, thus producing partnerships with Buffalo tourism businesses that could reap dramatic, productive business results for the community.

President and CEO Patrick Kaler should extend the invitations to these luminaries, including the chief executives of the Destination Marketing Association International, the International Association of Venue Managers, the US Travel Association, Brand USA, the Society of American Travel Writers, the US Tour Operators Association, the National Tour Association and the American Bus Association.

Following an afternoon site inspection tour of the community, they will meet with government and business leaders to share their insights and renewed optimism for Buffalo. Then the next morning, at a meeting attended by hundreds of local tourism industry stakeholders, the invited chief executives will share their personal and professional observations for the future of Buffalo in relationship to their own industry market segments and interests.

The new tourism white paper should also be unveiled by its principal developers during this important occasion.

This important event will convey a powerful and persuasive message to tourism leaders everywhere that Buffalo Niagara is now emerging as a major new player in the industry.

Managing Buffalo Niagara's Bright Tourism Future

7. Encourage government consideration of new community master planning that prominently incorporates and integrates the growth industry of tourism and its substantial benefits as is now being done by many successful communities.

A major consideration for Buffalo Niagara should be tourism destination product development through community master planning that focuses on producing financial performance, economic growth, increased market share for destinations as well as positive and lasting social benefits. A tourism master plan for Buffalo would also provide synergistic support and growth for the numerous capital projects slated for completion during the next three years. Such a process may include market research, industry benchmarking, and case studies of comparable destinations that could provide new ideas and opportunities for Buffalo's consideration. Dependent on need, the focus may include:

- Evaluating current conditions that may be hindering the growth of the visitor industry in Buffalo.
- Reviewing various need areas for the visitor industry including event facilities, attractions, festivals, and other demand generators. The focus can extend to shortcomings that may not be directly related to the visitor industry such as downtown housing, retail, streetscape and sidewalk conditions, and public transportation.
- Maintaining a focus on elements of the destination that are unique and authentic that can help create differentiation among competitive markets
- Making sure that the ultimate plan has full buy-in from public sector staff and elected officials, as well as key stakeholders in the visitor industry.

Issues addressed in such an analysis could also include:

- Identify lodging infrastructure, existing convention, conference and meeting facilities, and physical improvements that would enhance a visitor-friendly image—including issues such as signage, landscaping, security, aesthetics, green space, transportation linkages, and related features.
- Identify potential support for major destination attractions that could be developed to drive large increases in visitation.
- Evaluate municipal policies and procedures for their effectiveness in supporting the visitor industry—with recommendations designed to encourage visitor-related development.
- Evaluate the adequacy of destination marketing financial resources.
- Identify potential land acquisition needs and funding sources to ensure future visitor industry infrastructure development.
- Identify public sector initiatives that enhance the attractiveness of the destination.

- Clarify the economic impacts from major development opportunities, and include pro-formas as well.
- Evaluate local visitor industry organizations to ensure that the internal structures and cross-organizational linkages are conducive to growing the industry.
- Evaluate how current visitors to the area perceive the destination (through strategic plan findings and additional interviews conducted for this component of work), and identify changes that may be necessary to motivate and deliver additional visitors.
- Assess how regional travelers who have not been to the destination perceive it.

The result of these efforts, along with a comprehensive benchmarking analysis of competitive destinations, would identify strengths and weaknesses of the broad visitor industry, provide detailed strategies for improvement, and roles/responsibilities for particular entities in implementing recommendations.

Market Diversification through Attraction Development -- During master planning assessment, there may also be an exceptional opportunity for conceptualizing and creating a new visitor attraction that synergistically works with hotels and other community amenities to maximize new visitors, support Erie County and Buffalo's potential as a family destination, while serving as a major facility for the enrichment and enjoyment of local residents as well.

What could such an attraction offer, and what public and private manpower and financial resources must be provided to bring such an opportunity to fruition? The main priority would be to consider potential steps and benefits of a comprehensive community assessment for product differentiation and infrastructure analysis. Its purpose: To evaluate existing visitor industry infrastructure and amenities and evaluate specific opportunities for enhancements that could serve to improve Buffalo's destination appeal and drive new visitation.

Recommendation: To explore this tourism master planning concept and what it could achieve for Buffalo, an initial meeting is recommended with the DMO board and government leadership. A national expert in tourism master planning should be invited to review current processes, successful case histories and answer questions. VBN should engage and utilize the resources of the Regional Economic Development Council of Empire State Development.

VBN should pursue grant funding for this initiative.

Brand Development

8. Continue to develop, enrich and promote Buffalo Niagara’s current tourism brand identity and brand promise for visitors by implementing a preferred industry destination branding process of consumer research, stakeholder input and culturization that enhances its competitive position through strong community support and participation.

Benefits provided

- Clearly defined points of differentiation to distance Buffalo from competitors in the minds of visitors.
- Creation of a “promise” that frames the destination experience from the visitors perspective as the basis for decision making and planning.
- Increased tourism revenues and profitability
- Improved image as new brand initiatives revitalize the destination
- Culturization of new opportunities for the development of stakeholder partnerships and alliances between private businesses and public organizations.
- Enhanced competitive positioning and market share.
- Increased visitor financial contribution
- More engaged hospitality constituency and government support at all levels.

Recommended major qualities of a successful destination brand initiative include

Front-Load total buy-in. From the outset, there must be enthusiastic participation from community leadership and hundreds of key community stakeholders who buy into the process, or the destination brand will fall short of its anticipated goals.

It is not about advertising, your brand is a strategic asset. To become a distinctive, one-of-a-kind destination brand that wins the hearts and minds of visitors requires an integrated strategic approach to brand development. Brands are more than names, symbols or slogans. A genuine brand is the “internalized sum of all impressions received by visitors and prospective visitors, resulting in a distinctive position in their “mind’s eye” based on perceived emotional and functional behavior.” Advertising and promotion are important, but only after a distinctive promise is developed.

Adhere to a set of Principles. Establish a set of brand values and principles to guide behavior and decision making.

Consistency. Staying true to the road map by following the designated course of action and messages is the path to attaining destination brand goals.

Stand Out to Stand Apart. The destination brand platform must be built on a set of attributes and factors, provided by research, that distinguish it from competitors in the minds and perspectives of visitors, influencers and stakeholders.

Brand evangelists are critical. To ensure total commitment and support at the most important levels of government, everyone throughout the community from the very top to the very bottom becomes an evangelist for the brand. No one person alone can champion the cause. It takes the team to ensure that all messages are aligned with the promise.

Live the Promise. A genuine destination brand is a pact with visitors. Successful brands keep their commitments with visitors and enthusiastically deliver on the promise throughout the entire community.

Step 1 – Brand Analysis and Research – Formal brand research of visitors/non-visitors and stakeholder interviews. Review of existing Brand position and execution of community wide Brand Summit.

Step 2 – Brand Benchmark – Review of research data to determinate key destination attributes and emotional connections among visitors and stakeholders.

Step 3 – Brand Promise - A clear definition and description of the destination’s emotional and functional benefits that will serve as the “Guiding Star” for all future brand development and marketing efforts.

Step 4 – Brand Enrichment – Creation of the specific steps necessary to bring the destination brand to life. This will include working with the ad agency on logo and tagline development as well as recommending possible service training programs or infrastructure development.

Step 5 – Brand Future – Suggestion of strategic partnerships that can leverage the destination brand among the community and grow its brand equity.

Step 6 – Brand Blueprint – Development of a formal working document that highlights all of the activities described above and will serve as the reference tool for all community presentations and for staff referral.

9. Continue to build Buffalo Niagara’s Brand with media publicity through an expanded focus on the broad based leisure travel market, and a new emphasis on travel media familiarization tours that will significantly boost consumer awareness leading to visitation.

Today’s industry research consistently concludes that destination brands are best built with PR/publicity and not with advertising (see the best seller *The Fall of Advertising & the Rise of PR* by Al and Laura Ries). This is because the messages that appear on editorial pages in stories—and not through purchased advertising—consistently garner higher marks with consumers for credibility. For these reasons, newspaper editorial travel sections, consumer travel magazines, and online, blogs and social media outlets have a powerful influence over the way travelers plan and choose their vacation travel. And this influence continues to grow, according to recent research studies.

The most important strategic initiative for generating major earned media coverage changing visitor attitudes is not through traditional press releases, but rather through on-site writer familiarization—allowing travel writers to share their personal experiences with readers that best motivate them to make future travel decisions to Buffalo.

The most effective method for destination familiarization is a process which plans and hosts journalists for each of their programs. The key to success is individually tailored itineraries designed to meet the individual needs of each travel journalist.

This requires a disciplined and effective planning process that includes unique and diverse tour experiences that intrigue writers and fulfill special needs of the destination and its tourism partners. Accomplishing this labor-intensive process also requires increased special assistance for each writer from the VBN staff as well as significant financial and in-kind services, but the results for this process can consistently be positive and extremely productive. Thus it will be critical that financial resources be dedicated to this initiative, while also continuing to build the already positive relationships with the destination’s tourism industry to provide the best experiences to these travel and tourism influencers.

Meetings Development

10. Launch a newly created online website booking engine for meetings and convention business development through an internet based *Buffalo Niagara Convention Calendar* that links the convention center with thousands of new meeting planners, and guides them through the site selection process.

This state of the art initiative would highlight Buffalo's current onsite convention calendar and build on its electronic media leadership success in destination sales and marketing. The new program has just been announced through partnership with the International Association of Venue Managers and developed by Destination Advantage LLC, developer of the DMO industry's successful Hot Rates and Dates program. It will provide

- **Greater Awareness for Buffalo meetings** – through Destination Advantage LLC's proprietary database of more than 70,000 convention & meeting planner profiles. In addition, the program provides proven online destination marketing to reach event planners, exhibitors, local stakeholders, and delegates; highlighting the economic impact of the convention center, featured events, convention center availability and special booking incentives.
- **Lead Generation and booking** –Planners will now have access to a robust online calendar that shows current booked events but also includes special booking incentives and short term availability. Planners can submit RFP's directly to Convention Sales staff for appropriate follow-up.
- **Generate New Revenue** – Delivers a new funding source from advertising opportunities on the Buffalo Niagara Convention Calendar.
- **Attendance boosting at featured events.** Boosting Center attendance and selling more tickets at events on the Convention Calendar. Exhibitors and delegates can easily share events through social media channels.
- **Tracking & Reporting** – Buffalo will have real time access to measure destination awareness, lead generation, and attendance boosting efforts.

Professionalism

11. Establish New Global DMO Accreditation for Visit Buffalo Niagara that will serve as a visible industry distinction of quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management.

The president & CEO plans to register VBN for the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (known as DMAP) from the Destination Marketing Association International. Since January, 2007, 180 DMOs have earned their accreditation, which involves compliance with fifty-eight mandatory and thirty voluntary standards in areas including governance, finance, human resources, sales, marketing, communications, destination development and research.

Currently, one senior staff executive is pursuing industry Certification as a Destination Marketing Executive (CDME) from DMAI; one senior staff member has obtained the Certified Meeting Professionals (CMP) designation from the Convention Industry Council and five staff members are pursuing the CMP designation. One staff member of the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission has received the Certified Sports Event Executive designation from the National Association of Sports Commissions.

President and CEO Patrick Kaler holds a Master's Degree in Tourism Administration and has a significant career track record of management and marketing expertise through his work for nationally recognized destination marketing organizations.

Also, on an ongoing basis, the staff should continue to enhance their expertise by ramping up participation in local educational seminars and workshops, along with regional and national educational forums (particularly DMAI and US Travel). VBN leadership should continue to dedicate resources for ongoing education and training for staff enrichment.

Marketing Research

12. Produce a comprehensive Buffalo Niagara Visitor Market Study to provide much needed information for reaching and motivating the primary discretionary travel leisure market. The study would also prove invaluable to local community tourism stakeholders for their own marketing efforts.

The methodology and process: An analysis of both the visitor and the non-visitor markets are recommended, focusing on the overnight market—within a 300-to 400-mile radius that potentially contributes about eighty percent of destination leisure visitors. About 600 survey respondents can produce a study that is projectable to Buffalo’s universe of potential visitors.

The sample for the Internet survey can be procured by analysts through a national survey panel with millions of consumers that match US census data within 1 percent and are representative of the larger North American population. As a result, the research firm should be able to select survey participants according to more than 120 lifestyle characteristics, including travel interests and behaviors. The Canadian market should also be represented. Respondents to the survey should be recruited according to the following criteria:

- males and females living within required geographic areas
- people having taken a leisure trip and stayed in a hotel within the past twelve months
- people involved in planning vacations or leisure trips for the household
- people with \$50,000+ annual household income.

The online survey instrument should be designed to assess various aspects of the leisure travel market. It can also further define potential visitors, evaluate current marketing activities, clarify area attribute/amenity appeals, and enhance messaging, the survey should address these key areas:

- **Developing a detailed picture of the current and potential visitor market** in terms of demographics, attitudes, travel needs, and behaviors
- **Understanding what non-visitors are looking for** in vacation destinations and how to best attract them to visit your destination in the future
- **Evaluating the importance of attributes** and amenities that drive visitation
- **Measuring awareness, familiarity, visitation, and consideration** of the area relative to nearby destinations
- **Measuring perceptions of your visitor attributes** in the context of competitive destinations and key drivers of visitation
- **Identifying new facilities and services** that would attract more visitors

- **Understanding how current communications are working** and uncovering potential ways to improve your future messaging
- **Measuring visit satisfaction, likes/dislikes/wish lists** and their likelihood to recommend.

13. Develop a competitive set analysis to determine how well the VBN is performing in relationship to its competition from other destinations.

How well is Visit Buffalo Niagara doing in delivering performance activity and productivity in comparison to other DMOs? Until now, much competitive information has been proprietary and unavailable, but a new program from the Destination Marketing Association International provides an instant, credible, and confidential way for VBN to compare and analyze its data regarding 100 key metrics with other participating DMOs including:

- meeting sales and booking pace
- Stakeholder engagement
- leisure marketing metrics including digital and social
- website results and much more.

14. Evaluate and enhance Buffalo Niagara’s meeting/convention/sports service to build customer retention.

Convention and Sports service evaluations are now requested by the services staff, but are only being completed by about two of every ten clients. This adversely impacts the staff’s ability to determine projectable levels of customer satisfaction and its ability to enhance service programs. This can occasionally be a universal industry problem, as busy clients prepare to leave for their next assignment with little thought about the evaluation needs of the DMO.

Recommendation: To assure receipt of these completed surveys, establish their completion as a first priority, and so note it as a personal performance objective of the staff person responsible for survey completion—incentivizing them for accomplishing the task of completing eight of ten surveys. Then develop a process for securing these surveys through phone and email responses that include ongoing follow-up with clients until completed.

Market Research

15. Determine Buffalo/Erie County's tourism market share in relationship to state growth, as well as to other New York competing destinations.

An annual study from New York tourism quantifies the economic impact values of tourism on a state basis, as well as for each individual county, including visitor receipts, resulting tax revenue, the numbers of businesses serving travelers, employees in the industry and jobs generated by visitor spending. Produced by Tourism Economics, this is a valuable asset for quantifying the tremendous positive impacts from tourism spending in Erie County.

To aid in determining the growth and value of the area's tourism economy, it is recommended that VBN request a brief comparative analysis by Tourism Economics that shows the growth of state tourism during the past five to ten years, determining the relative market share of Erie County visitor expenditures for the period.

If Erie County's market share has increased over the time frame in relationship to other competitors and/or the state, it illustrates the strong viability of the Buffalo region as a major market for future visitors and travel marketing attention. If, on the other hand, there is a reduction in Erie County's market share, a competitive set analysis should be considered including other state destinations who outspend Buffalo for destination marketing.

Fulfilling Customer Needs

16. Engage VBN customers via organized councils and/or surveys to facilitate capturing essential information and data for understanding critical customer perceptions and needs.

Three priority customers should be analyzed:

The Meetings/Conventions: Through the newly created VBN Customer Advisor Council, current, previous and potentially new executive level management and meeting planners will convene annually in Buffalo to advise on:

- overall perceptions of Buffalo Niagara region
- quality of the convention center facility
- quality of hotel and off-site facilities
- management of convention/meeting requirements
- quality of hotel accommodations
- quality of food and beverage
- quality of transportation and logistics
- quality of planning and administration for both the convention sales and convention services departments
- quality of customer service from the convention sales and convention services departments
- quality of sales marketing tools, including but not limited to printed collateral, website/online, advertising, site visit protocol

Meeting planners should be asked their overall opinion on areas that VBN excels as well as what areas are weak and need improvement. The council will be asked to make suggestions to improve convention processes or quality of customer service.

The Tour Operator Survey: Tour operator surveys would be directed to those who bring group tours to or near Buffalo Niagara. The focus is on perceptions of the destination as an attraction and the quality of service provided by the tourism staff. Tour operators would be asked to indicate multiple characteristics of their business in relationship to the destination. They would be asked to rate the following categories:

- quality of accommodations
- quality of attractions
- quality of restaurants
- experience at destination
- quality of DMOs promotional activities and services.

The tour operators should also be asked what the DMO did really well; to comment on anything they were unhappy about, and for suggestions to improve the quality of customer service. The focus of the survey is on very specific aspects of customer service, with the opportunity for narrative comments and responses to open-ended questions. This is very effective for zeroing in on specific areas for improvement. Typical categories are as follows:

- quality of product, service, or program
- quality of customer service from staff
- professionalism and competence
- other operational aspects for review and feedback.

17. With the support of government leaders, improve efficiencies of the current municipal oversight contract through an agreement that encourages long range partnership success.

Throughout the destination marketing industry, the majority of DMOs having contracts with government agencies are for multi-year durations, with the average term being six years.

VBN currently has a one year contract with the County that is supported by ongoing market and business plans as well as attendant quantitative and qualitative performance goals to be achieved--one of the most comprehensive and well documented contract commitments in the industry.

However, most experts agree that one-year government contracts with DMOs can minimize contractor confidence and can impede performance. They are also a serious impediment to long range planning, the contracting of marketing work required by other major suppliers such as advertising, trade shows, and a host of other tactical work, and can adversely affect employee morale and ultimately, job retention.

Recommendation: For these reasons, a revised three to five year agreement should be pursued (considered/investigated).

Vision

18. The Board should endorse a long range vision for Visit Buffalo Niagara that aspires to the principles of destination marketing and management excellence and clarifies how it should be recognized by the community and its stakeholders.

The new vision should answer these questions: How can Visit Buffalo Niagara best fulfill its mission for the positive future of the community, and what values must be embraced to fulfill that goal?

During this strategic planning process, members of the board of directors worked to create a vision for the future DMO, and how it should be recognized. They began by imagining that it was actually five years hence, and the optimal destination marketing organization had now been created for the community.

How do we best describe this new organization and its attributes? And what values did we foster and embrace in order to create it during the ensuing period? In other words, what do we value for the current organization and what can we pragmatically see improved? Board members then listed their perceived attributes of the future Visit Buffalo Niagara:

- Has a forward looking board that fulfills a productive strategic vision
- A well trained, dedicated and skilled staff
- The DMO provides a marketing program effort that consistently produces new, incremental business results for its community and stakeholders
- It operates with candor, transparency and best business principles in a full partnership with government and community business interests
- Its programs of performance and operational excellence meet and exceed the professional standards of today's optimum DMO
- It is the community's respected leader for tourism development
- The DMO enjoys strong partnership support and marketing participation of community stakeholders and organizations
- It operates with a competitively funded program providing required manpower and marketing resources to achieve success

These required attributes were then combined and incorporated to describe this new vision of the Visit Buffalo Niagara of tomorrow.

Revised Visit Buffalo Niagara Vision Statement

Visit Buffalo Niagara is an organization that adheres to the highest professional and industry standards to project a consistent, positive image for Erie County that emphasizes its unique qualities. VBN creates and maintains public and private partnerships to fulfill its mission, and promotes community awareness of the importance of the visitor industry to the local, state and regional economies.

Recommendation: The board should adopt this new vision and memorialize it in all appropriate public affairs communications messages. As part of annual market planning, the vision statement should be annually reviewed by board and staff to determine potential modifications going forward.

Additional Long Range Opportunities

Following review, approval and scheduling of the top seventeen opportunities, here are other potentials for future consideration.

Keep the region apprised about what's happening in Buffalo, who's coming, and how tourism works for them, which is also supportive of the visiting friends and relatives market.

Focus on authentic experiences, and sharing the New Vibe Story – pitching these stories to interested travel media. The Public Arts Initiative from Albright-Knox will also contribute to the vibe.

Stronger coalition building with VBN and other organizations in an effort to deepen knowledge and education for public sector buy-in for tourism and the DMO

VBN should take more credit for its significant success on behalf of the community, and change the perception that tourism isn't important to government, industry and the resident population.

Develop local industry roundtable discussions, the most effective method for sharing and the development of collaborative programs, rather than just the reporting out of work achieved by the VBN.

Rely on strong and positive testimonials from writers, planners and tour leaders to tell the Buffalo Niagara story.

The new leadership for the VBN has a fresh vision, voice and visibility that should be emulated and encouraged throughout the community.

Transportation and travel: Public transportation alternatives should be explored—we are too car dependent.

Wayfinding signage is an important need in in moving people easily throughout the community. Such a program also identifies our great visitor resources that build our brand and enhance the value of the visitor experience while encouraging repeat visitation.

Concentrate on markets and opportunities that will continue to produce the greatest returns.

Educating our constituents builds program understanding and collaboration, and that's a necessity in this competitive environment. Also, find new ways to increase relevance with industry partners.

Explore new partnership opportunities including integration of all touristic assets, attributes and segments for a broader world view.

Leverage opportunities through national tourism week and with state tourism, Niagara County and greater Toronto. Also, find additional alignment with the Buffalo Billion dollar renaissance plan such as master planning.

Cross promotions, such as using local celebrities, dignitaries (i.e.: Buffalo Bills/Sabres players/coaches, Goo Goo Dolls, Dr. Khurshid Guru, Brian McKnight, Christine Baranski, etc.) to promote museums and the arts.

Plan an expanded program of travel intermediary familiarization programs that are extremely effective in generating new business, including those for travel writers, meetings planners, tour operators, as well as front line local service personnel.

Develop pre and post meeting programs to extend the stay of those coming for events/conferences.

Work to provide International Designation of the Niagara River (ecological integrity of the river).

Foster local tourism industry support and participation (brand culturization) in using Buffalo's destination brand messages.

Incorporate other opportunities for consideration, including a Wine trail and Agri-tourism.

Leverage resources of the colleges and universities to promote the Buffalo Niagara experience.

Use technology and incorporate weather for real time updates to visitors.

Open the lines of communication, making information available as to why Buffalo was not chosen to host particular events, and other competitive information that makes us more proficient in our marketing.

Create more community cheerleaders for Buffalo Niagara tourism.

Seek out board and committee representation by experienced industry leaders and destination marketing professionals.

The Strategic Planning Consultant Team

Marshall Murdaugh, President, Marshall Murdaugh Marketing, was retained by Visit Buffalo Niagara to provide strategic support in development of this plan.

An internationally recognized consultant to successful destination marketing organizations and the communities they serve, Marshall Murdaugh served as President and CEO for some of America's most successful and best recognized programs, including New York City (88-94), Atlantic City (94-00), Memphis (83-88) and the State of Virginia (70-83) where he developed the successful and award-winning "Virginia is for Lovers" marketing campaign. For the past fourteen years, his consulting firm, headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, has provided award-winning strategic planning services to more than ninety county, city, state and regional destination programs and organizations.

Murdaugh was a member of the Performance Team that developed the convention/tourism industry's Marketing Performance Standards and return-on-investment criteria for the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI). He is the recipient of the Lifetime Career Achievement Award from the Association of Travel Marketing Executives and is a former member of the board of the Destination Marketing Association International and the U.S. Travel Association.

His new book, *Destination Marketing Insights: How to Boost Performance, Increase Customers and Maximize Market Share* is acknowledged as a major industry resource for destination marketing and management. For more information, visit WWW.MMTourismMarketing.com

Wil Brewer, President of Performance-Solutions-Group, Inc. (PSG), developed and conducted the Stakeholder Perception Survey for this plan. Based in Stamford, Ct., PSG is a management consulting company, whose domestic and international focus is

- Performance management systems
- Facilitation of the strategic planning process
- Pay-for-performance compensation plans, compensations structures and marketing pricing surveys
- Management diagnostics (360 degree reviews. Employee engagement surveys, customer/ stakeholder surveys)
- Management and leadership training
- Executive coaching
- Behavioral assessments

PSG works with Fortune 500 companies as well as small and medium-sized and leading not-for-profit organizations. Additionally, Wil Brewer, has provided many of the above consulting services to numerous DMOs throughout the industry, including most of the largest.

Ralph Thompson, President and Chief Brain of eBrains, Inc. assisted in the facilitation of this plan's focus group sessions of community stakeholders, including the board of the VBN and senior staff.

His 40 year+ business background includes formal training and grounding in finance and accounting with Price Waterhouse Coopers and as the Chief Operating Officer of the Martin Agency, one of the nation's leading creative advertising firms.

Thompson has worked with global, national, regional and local brands to develop and implement digital solutions on a guaranteed basis. While his knowledge spans most industry categories, he has focused primarily on destination marketing brands for the past 15 years at country, state, regional and DMO levels for over 150 destinations.

In addition to Visit Buffalo Niagara, clients range from the US, Canada and Peru; to Florida, Virginia, Texas, Nebraska; to Great Lakes, Southeast Tourism Society and CARUSA to New Orleans, Orlando, Hilton Head Island and less well known Marietta, Ohio; Victoria, Texas and Parkersburg, WVA.

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