

2022 SENECA NATION VISITOR ECONOMY MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Destination Plan



FAMOUS DESTINATION MARKETING

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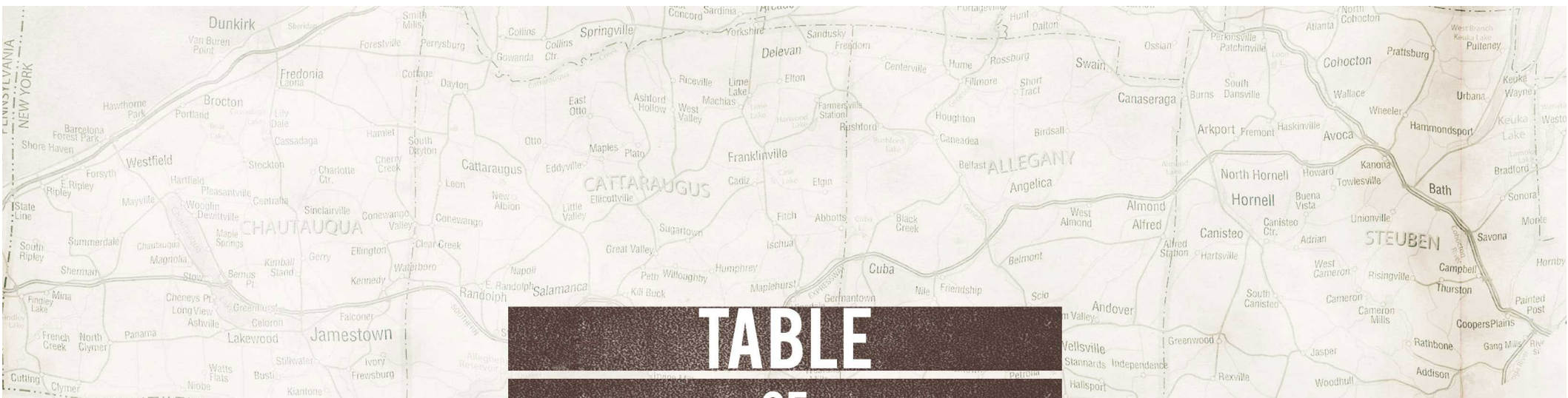


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1.

WHY A VISITOR ECONOMY MANAGEMENT OFFICE IS ESSENTIAL



The Ongoing Role of a Visitor Economy Management Office:

Every community now must recognize that new economies are emerging, and past economies may now be fully in the past. For most destinations, large scale agriculture and industrial manufacturing are not growth segments and will not be again. Therefore, every community now must compete in a new way with every other community for its share of the world's attention, customers, and investments.

Stewardship and promotion of the destination's visitor economy are now essential to support opportunities and build quality of life that benefit all the residents of the community. A visitor economy can be fully leveraged as an economic development strategy, provide local jobs, build pride and passion locally and provide hope for a healthy and strong future of a community.

Visitor Economy/Destination Marketing and Management Organizations are uniquely positioned to fulfill a cross-section of roles that no other organization specifically covers. A community needs to be promoted, marketed, pitched and championed holistically and these messages need to be reinforced again and again to the public and marketplace. The staff of these organizations are working for the betterment of a local community as a whole and not just one business sector. They are a community asset.

The goal of this work is always for the benefit of the local resident first. An alignment over time is necessary for a destination's residents to see the value of the visitor economy and for the industry to guard the concerns of the residents.

A full visitor economy goes far beyond front line staff at hotels and attractions. Employment on all levels of the local economy is supported as small businesses flourish by supporting the businesses that are directly engaging the public. The coffee shop and landscaper are equally supported by the growth of visitation. One directly in serving the public and one in supporting the community that is rising from investment.

Because of the overwhelming economic good that visitors bring, the community's story, culture, and people must have a consistent positive public impression and make visitors want to visit. This is the work a Visitor Economy Management Office is created for and tasked with for the collective good of the community they serve.

2.

ORGANIZATIONAL VISION / MISSION / VALUES

The Seneca Nation's Visitor Economy Management Office:

VISION:

To be a national example of excellence in destination marketing, management and stewardship of a visitor economy that strengthens the community and culture of the Seneca Nation.

MISSION:

This office will assist in the advancement of economic development in the Seneca Nation by growing and managing the Visitor Economy. This will create: Brand value growth, small business success, community revitalization, pride of culture, employment/youth employment, quality of life development, cultural preservation and increased revenue in existing properties.

This will be accomplished with stewardship of the destination including: Exceptional branding, marketing, sales, collaboration, and advocacy.

VALUES: The primary values of this office are:

(See Appendix: #1 – Destinations International – Values of a Destination Marketing Organization)

- PASSION
- AWARENESS
- TRANSPARENCY
- INCLUSIVENESS
- ENGAGEMENT
- COLLABORATION
- INNOVATION
- STEWARDSHIP
- RELEVANCE

This process was overseen by Famous Destination Marketing's Josiah Brown. Josiah has been in the tourism industry, specifically in New York, for 18 years and lends his experience from not only the tourism industry, but the vast network of destinations he works in each year. The 2020 Destination Assessment by New York Welcomes You, Inc. was the starting foundation for this process and forthcoming recommendations.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THIS PLAN:

- To outline the need that drove the process of starting a Destination Marketing and Management Office for the Seneca Nation.
- To listen to the community's sentiment about the future of tourism and visitor economy growth and represent the core desires and ideas in future planning.
- To deliver the framework for a destination plan that embraces a visitor economy as an economic development strategy.
- To show where tourism can be used as a specific tool to foster the investment in the community where it is most needed.

DESTINATION TOURS & RE-VISITS:

- Gakwi:yo:h Farms revisit + bison farm
- Fish and Wildlife – Tour of the fish hatchery
- Highbanks Campground – Extensive walkthrough and interviews
- Seneca Allegany Casino – Heritage Month Dinner

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS:

Three rounds of Stakeholder Interviews were held to capture the local understanding of the visitor economy, ideas for growth, entrepreneurial ideas and local sentiment on tourism.

CLEAR IDEAS & SENTIMENTS RECEIVED FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS:

- Strong support of the Seneca Nation pursuing a strategy of economic development through tourism.
- Destination sports, particularly Lacrosse, and an effort to create a premier Lacrosse venue were enthusiastically welcomed.
- Tourism infrastructure and product is needed and entrepreneurs with ideas need financial support. Several stakeholders suggested a "Tourism Incubator Fund" to help seed ideas that align with the Nation's tourism goals. (See Recommendation #3)
- There is passion for creating storytelling opportunities, cultural pride demonstrations and sharing of pre-selected narratives and traditions in a tourism setting for the employment and empowerment of the Seneca youth.
- The recognition that development of assets that make the public want to visit are the same quality of life assets that help retain residents.
- Quality food is a tourism driver and there is a wide-open opportunity for traditional and contemporary culinary experiences.
- There was recognition that a strong "Center post" needed to be established to connect and lead collaboration between all the sectors and silos where tourism assets are represented.
- Large consumer contact lists exist within several marketing departments and while there has never been "an ask" there is plenty of willingness to co-market cultural add-ons and experiences to these current customer contacts.
- The One Stops, gas stations and cigarette shops are already a "First touch" to many consumers. A frontline training program should be implemented to leverage this opportunity for marketing/branding of the destinations product and brand.



4.

ROLE OF THE VISITOR ECONOMY MANAGEMENT OFFICE

- Build and steward the destination brand
- Champion the industry
 - Advocacy
 - Education
 - Workforce Development/Front End Training
 - Networking
- Sell the Destination
 - Consumer
 - Meetings
 - Groups/Tour/Bus
 - Conferences
 - Sports
 - Weddings
 - International/FIT
- Market the Destination
 - Advertising
 - Travel Guide
 - Public Relations
 - Event Publicity
 - Social Media & Digital
 - Media Asset Library

- Liaison and connector:
 - Public / Private / Elected Leadership
 - Regional, Chamber, and Neighboring Tourism Leadership
 - National, State and Industry Leadership
- Keeper of the Destination Calendar
- Benchmarking, Measurement and Research

**THESE ROLES SHOULD SERVE
AS THE STARTING POINT STRUCTURE
FOR A YEARLY BUSINESS PLAN.**

5.

STRUCTURE / BUDGET

STAFF:

Destinations across the Northeast range between 3-35 staff members depending on the economic impact. The starting five positions would be:

- Director of the Visitor Economy Management Office
- Communications and Marketing Manager
- PR and Digital Media Specialist
- Events and Marketplace Sales Manager
- Partner and Community Engagement Manager
- Office and Logistics Manager – Local Event Liaison

BUDGET STRUCTURE TO BEGIN WITH:

Suggested operating budget approach (Non-staff funds):

- 20% - Organizational
 - Conferences/Travel (Sales trips, industry conferences)
 - Memberships
 - Events (Awareness, involvement, advocacy)
 - Office/Admin
- 40% - Measurable Marketing Activities
 - Digital marketing and contracts
 - Advertising and contracts
 - Public relations
- 20% - Branding
 - Industry/external events
 - Agency contracts
 - Media content development
 - Asset library maintenance
- 20% - Exploratory
 - New Media
 - New advertising opportunities
 - New events
 - Opportunities during budget year



6.

RECOMMENDATIONS/PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PLANS

In addition to some overall recommendations, we spent considerable time during this process looking at destination experiences that warrant further development. These are outlined below as Product Development Plans:

1. Yearly Business Plan:

A yearly business plan should be built from this plans overall framework each year. The plan should address the year's tasks and further the strategic and tactical recommendations of the main plan. Input from a yearly listening session should be included as well.

2. Develop a Visitor Economy Advisory Committee

This is not a management or steering group, but an industry and community think tank, sounding board and brain trust.

- Members might include:

- Member of Executive Office
- Member of Council
- Elected Official
- Artists/Makers
- Cultural/Language Representative
- Museum
- Agriculture
- Tourism Business Community
- Lodging
- Casinos
- Fish and Wildlife
- Legal
- Tourism Industry - Regional
- Sports/Lacrosse Tourism
- Community Leader
- Others as expertise aligns

3. Tourism Incubator Fund

Tourism can be aligned as a full economic development strategy that is pointed to areas of needed growth. Often tourism assets are the same assets that builds the quality of life for residents to choose to live in a destination. That fabric of experiences needs to be further developed in the Nation for the public to have attractive options that cause a decision to spend time and money in the destination.

A Tourism Incubator Fund should be developed help seed the entrepreneurial ideas that are aligned with the following product development:

- Destination foodie experiences/family dining
- Maker's economy sales, showcasing and event creation
- Artist and maker interactive experiences/galleries
- Public art and murals
- Boutique lodging
- Guides, tours and led outdoor experiences
- Outdoor recreation outfitters
- Sports Outfitters/Retail

This fund's application process could be overseen by the office and scored by the Advisory Committee for recommendations.

4. Dovetailing of current tourism strategies eventually together into one overall strategy and plan:

In the absence of an overall tourism plan, several independent efforts have been created and many exciting plans are currently underway.

• Joe Stahlman at the Cultural Center and Museum has continually looked for opportunities for tourism growth. He created the following programs and momentum:

- Medicine trail around the cultural center.
- A longhouse project
- Community plant and herb "garden" along the creek by the Allegany campus.
- Two grants for a trail for history, culture, and plant markers in the Allegany and Cattaraugus areas.
- Grant for a Four Day Seneca Homelands Tour.
- Embrace the Casinos as a major part of the current tourism landscape but separate in implementation of marketing and branding strategy for the foreseeable future. Endeavor to keep the efforts of the office forefront to the management and marketing teams and work toward any and all collaborations.
- Work to partner with Highbanks Campground for synergy in marketing and social media efforts. This office should look to support the campground in its marketing in both advisory and overall campaign.

5. Product Development Plans: Destination Sports Facility

Pointedly using tourism to further economic development is often the clear goal of a destination sports strategy. Most times people believe that if developers come and revitalize an area that it will suddenly boom in visitation. That is true when such a benevolent process happens, however, that rarely happens. The reality is that strategies must be developed to attract visitation first and then entrepreneurial development springs out of the vacuum if services that become obvious. Destination sports and “Sport-cations” are one of the fastest growing sectors of the visitor economy. This sector can attract visitation and investment without a full infrastructure already in place. Essentially, events start to happen and suddenly investors realize there are customers to attract to a variety of other experiences or businesses.

One of the strongest recommendations from the Destination Assessment was to establish a “Pilgrimage of Lacrosse” type facility akin to what Cooperstown is for baseball. Cooperstown’s financial success is not the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Instead, the Hall of Fame and Museum laid the “Pilgrimage to baseball’s home” foundation for a weeklong youth sports camp that was established. Thousands of visitors come every week from all over the country and world for 13 weeks per year to watch their children compete.

To build thousands of hotel rooms, restaurants, attractions, and the hundreds of businesses that rose to support those businesses would have been impossible before this youth camp was opened.

- A clear recommendation of this Destination Plan process is to move forward plans to establish a product that encompasses the following:
 - A facility that can be marketed as a national level youth lacrosse camp product with lodging for camp youth.
 - To leverage the “Origin Region” story of lacrosse as a Seneca/Haudenosaunee game creating the “Pilgrimage of lacrosse” marketing reality.
 - A hall of fame and museum that can one day welcome the National Lacrosse Museum and Hall of Fame if possible.
 - Competition grounds for national and regional sports/lacrosse tournaments.
 - An indoor facility that can be marketed as the “Largest” in category.

It is our belief that the establishment and sales of this product and would lead to explosive destination development all around it. Those ideas can and should be tested in a feasibility study.

6. Product Development Plans: Highbanks Campground:

Continually develop Highbanks Campground into a destination campground. The outdoor lodging industry is experiencing explosive growth, and this can be leveraged successfully if the campground continues to align with national trends.

- Formalize a yearly marketing plan and budget.
- Build infrastructure toward a “Destination resort/family campground” and not simply a weekend experience.
- Full Hook-Up sites are a top priority. This will require a sewage plan to be aggressively pursued.
- Quality of bathrooms needs to continually rise.
- Create higher value sites than simply tent sites – Glamping, tiny homes, tent platforms, covered outdoor dining area.
- Explore retail options for marina including bathrooms, fuel sales, bait shop, café and rental fleet of paddling equipment and boats.
- Add educational programming and cultural celebrations to the campground’s event schedule.
- Work in conjunction with local events and the museum to move campers out of the campground to see other Seneca Nation attractions.
- Leverage the awareness of Allegany State Park for an increased awareness of the campground and create complimentary events and offerings.

7. Product Development Plans: Gakwi:yo:h Farms

One of the core desires of travelers is to have an authentic experience: An authentic culinary experience, authentic storytelling, and authentic cultural site tours. The farm location beautifully encompasses all of the above opportunities above.

Tours:

- The farm will need basic infrastructure to accommodate tours such as the ability for a bus to enter, turn around and park.
- Staff resources need to be made available for daily tours as often as possible. The historic stories and current agricultural stories provide a compelling tour product. This staff should not be looked at on a cost/ROI basis simply on value of the tours at the farm. This staff will be supporting the ability to sell multi-stop tours, the ability to capture more overnights of groups, and the ability to market and brand products of the farm.

- Food experiences: The farm should move toward building the capacity for “Foodie” experiences with agricultural storytelling and cultural storytelling as often as possible. These experiences should not be measured simply on the cost/ROI of the meals but the value of the overall cultural storytelling, regional impact of storytelling and the support of other Nation tourism attractions and overall group product offerings.

8. Product Development Plans: Fish Hatchery/Hellbenders

There is an opportunity to welcome the public and/or tours into this experience. Every experience on the Nation provides an opportunity for storytelling and this is no exception. The work of the hatchery and the ability to showcase live hellbenders is strong tourism product. These would of course need to operate on a schedule.

7.

APPENDIX

#1. Destinations International – Values of a Destination Marketing Organization

- **PASSION:** Destination Passion is an intense enthusiasm for our destination, our community, and its people.
- **AWARENESS:** Destination Awareness is a concern about, and well-informed interest in, the history, situation, people and/or development in our specific destination. It is also something to be fostered in others.
- **TRANSPARENCY:** Destination Transparency is all about being proactively open to stakeholder and public scrutiny.
- **INCLUSIVENESS:** Destination Inclusiveness means including and not excluding any area or neighborhood of our destination, any group or segment of people within our destination, or any history, culture, or tradition.
- **ENGAGEMENT:** Destination Engagement is the process of informing and listening to groups of people within our destination to address issues affecting the wellbeing of the community and promotion of the destination.
- **COLLABORATION:** Destination Collaboration is the action of working with our stakeholders, to produce or create something within our destination.
- **INNOVATION:** Destination Innovation means to make changes in something established, especially by introducing new destination promotion methods, ideas, or products.
- **STEWARDSHIP** Destination Stewardship is balancing economic development, sustainable tourism, and quality of life.
- **RELEVANCE:** Destination Relevance comes from being closely connected and involved in what is being done or considered in our destination.
- **COMMUNITY SHARED VALUE:** Being a shared value in our destination means we are a community asset responsible for programs promoting a community as an attractive travel destination and enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the knowledge of the destination, brand management, promotional programs, and the resulting impacts of visits by people, we strengthen the community's economic position and vitality, which provides opportunity for all the people in the destination.

