



**Visitor Experience Fund Grant Guidelines  
Sponsored by Ontario County's Official Tourism Agency  
d.b.a. A Finger Lakes Visitors Connection**

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection (FLVC) is a not-for-profit, 501c3, and local development corporation for Ontario County.  
Finger Lakes Visitors Connection is the official tourism promotion agency for Ontario County.**

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection Mission and Vision:**

Mission: To create visitorship and economic vitality for Ontario County by marketing its tourism assets and positioning the area as a premier leisure and meetings destination. Vision: Tourism is recognized as an industry that contributes to the economic prosperity of Ontario County by infusing new dollars into our communities, enhancing the quality of life for our residents, and promoting the natural beauty of our county.

**About the Visitor Experience Fund**

Matching Funds are available on a competitive application basis to improve the Visitor Experience with a focus on Accessibility. FLVC has committed itself to a leadership role in accessibility and wishes to create a greater level of accessibility to visitors. The program is designed to engage tourism focused not-for-profits to see and seize opportunities to create a positive visitor experience, enhance accessibility, and grow their business.

**Eligibility of the Organization**

To apply the applicant must:

- Submit an application that directly impacts a tourism related facility in Ontario County.
- Be a 501c3 or 501c6 or governmental enterprise.
- Ensure the primary audience is visitors (those persons traveling outside of their normal place of residence or business for activities of leisure or meetings).
- Have a paid, full- or part-time professional executive/managing staff or demonstrated sound governance, administrative and financial practices.

**Funding Levels**

- Fund total for 2019 is \$25,000.
- Grant levels are up to \$5,000 with a 50% match of either in-kind or cash.
- It is not expected that partial funding will be administered.
- Funds will be distributed on reimbursement basis only and within the timeframes noted in reporting.

## Project Criteria

For a project to be considered the project should meet the following basic criteria:

- Address “Accessibility as a Priority.”
- Be completed between January 1, 2020 and March 1, 2021.
- Competitive application strength will be measured by rubric scores with a fully completed and documented application submitted by the deadlines noted below.

## Focus on Accessibility for All

Accessibility includes the total experience from original “search” for a destination or facility – meaning such things as website accessibility, accessibility for a variety of languages, and handicapped accessibility – to the in-destination experience. Please refer to the FLVC Policy on “Accessibility for All” for a broader overview of our goals.

### **Examples: Changes in travel behavior or demand or opportunity based on accessibility and the visitor experience**

- Improvement of accessibility (physical, visual, hearing) for the handicapped, the elderly or the otherwise impaired.
- Develop multi-language presentations and information on site – providing multi-cultural accessibility.
- Improvement of the multi-generational experience – i.e. having “things” for all age groups to do while visiting your place.
- Redevelopment of products or permanent interpretive exhibits with accessibility in mind.

### **Examples: Overall/Across Categories with an emphasis or application towards accessibility**

- Enhance transit and active transportation services and amenities to develop Ontario County as model of sustainable, accessible transportation.
- Provide effective visitor services and customer service at points of visitor contact.
- Wayfinding signage (within approved zoning regulations and common to Ontario County).
- The renovation/construction of tourism properties owned by a municipality or nonprofit, infrastructure improvements with a direct relationship to tourism, and other physical/structural items with a greater than 5-year lifespan and with accessibility in mind.

## Timeline

Projects will take place between 1/1/2020 and 3/1/2021.

Workshops for Overview of Programs. Questions and Answers. (not mandatory)

10/21/19: 6:30 p.m., Finger Lakes Visitors Connection Office, 25 Gorham Street, Canandaigua. RSVP: (585) 394-3915

10/31/19: 3:00 p.m., Finger Lakes Visitors Connection Office, 25 Gorham Street, Canandaigua. RSVP: (585) 394-3915

Applications Due: 11/19/19

Award Notifications Made: 12/19/19

Award Announcements Made at PR event: 1/29/20 (Must be represented)

**Disqualifiers/Not Eligible:**

- This is not a program intended for marketing (FLVC has a successful, productive track record in marketing).
- Not event or festival funding, except if it represents a new series of events in the “winter” or “off season” and “off-peak” time frame.
- Not exhibit or short-term project funding.

**Requirements/Reporting and/Accountability**

- a. Partnership with FLVC shall be recognized by awardees with a hyperlinked FLVC destination logo on their website. Rules regarding use of the destination logo are available at [visitfingerlakes.com/partners](http://visitfingerlakes.com/partners).
- b. Grantees shall publicly acknowledge the support of FLVC and Ontario County. Required recognition will be outlined in your award letter and agreement.
- c. Grant recipients are required to collect and share survey data which measures the tourism impact and results of your program.
- d. All deadlines are met.
- e. Timing. Within sixty (60) days of project completion, grant recipients will be required to submit a closeout report that will enable “FLVC” to evaluate the success of the project. If no report is submitted or an incomplete report, it will make the organization ineligible for future participation in this grant program.
- f. There will be a 10% financial holdback until completion.
- g. Content of the report. Example: The closeout report will specifically address the results/impact of the project and project finances, in addition to other items deemed appropriate by the applicant and/or requested by the “FLVC”. (Include photographs of completed project.)
- h. Non-completion of a final report within the time frame will make the recipient ineligible for future grants.

**Informational Resources:**

Attachment 1. Evaluators Rubric Model

Attachment 2. FLVC Policy on “Accessibility for All”

Attachment 3. Reporting Model Metrics

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020. ([VisitFingerLakes.com/partners](http://VisitFingerLakes.com/partners))

Please note that this program is a trial basis and elements are subject to change as we refine it. We thank you for your patience. It is also our plan to have a second year of this funding, Visitor Experience Fund – 2020, which may have a different area of emphasis. Stay tuned and indicate your interest in learning more and receiving future notifications by sending us an email regarding the 2020 program to [Julie@VisitFingerLakes.com](mailto:Julie@VisitFingerLakes.com). Thank you.

**Attachment 1. Rubric**

		Highest (3)	Middle (2)	Lowest (1)	comments
1.	Aligns with Strategic plan	Cites FLVC strategic plan and links your organizations stated goals to it.	Cites comparative areas between organizational goals.	Vague comparisons, Lacking in specificity	
2.	Meets the goal of this year's program, "accessibility".	Provide detail description citing evidence of accessibility ...trade publications, support materials	Made a good case, Limited evidence	No evidence, Or providing evidence	See attached "Accessibility for all" by FLVC.
3.	There is an implementation plan in place for this proposal	Detailed timelines Budget	Spoke in generalities	General No timeline	
4.	The level of matching funds are available for the program/proposal 50% match of money or in kind services	Commitment letter or proof of money, or evidence of value of in-kind services	Reasonable expectation that they know where the money could come from	Vague on where money is coming from	
5.	Plan for reporting completion and progress	There is a detailed plan to show us results/progress	Incomplete some aspects here	No plan to show progress	
6.	Demonstration of a long-range plan for improving accessibility	Articulate broader goals with regard to accessibility – written plan, meeting minutes-proof	Articulate broader goals without written plan	No proof, vague goals, without detailed evidence	
7.	Engages in partnerships	Proposal shows collaboration with other organizations	Might be an opportunity for collaboration	Shows no collaboration	Example – a group joining together to use 1 contractor to build multiple things (website upgrade, bathrooms...)

## **Attachment 2. Finger Lakes Visitors Connection: Policy on Accessibility (9/19)**

**Promoting Accessibility for All.** Globally, it is estimated that there are over 1 billion persons with disabilities, as well as more than 2 billion people, such as spouses, children and caregivers of persons with disabilities, representing almost a third of the world's population, directly affected by disability. While this signifies a huge potential market for travel and tourism, it remains vastly under-served due to inaccessible travel and tourism facilities and services, as well as discriminatory policies and practices.

**What is accessible tourism?** Accessible tourism enables all people to participate in and enjoy tourism experiences. More people have access needs, whether related to a physical condition. For example, older and less mobile people have access needs, which can become a huge obstacle when traveling or touring. Thus, accessible tourism is the ongoing endeavor to ensure tourist destinations, products and services are accessible to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age. This includes publicly and privately-owned tourist locations, facilities and services. Accessible tourism involves a collaborative process among all stakeholders, governments, international agencies, tour-operators and end-users, including persons with disabilities and their organizations. A successful tourism product requires effective partnerships and cooperation across many sectors.

### **What are the barriers to travel and tourism for persons with disabilities?**

For persons with disabilities, travelling can be a challenge. Finding the information on accessible services, checking luggage on a plane, and booking a room to fulfill access needs, often prove to be difficult, costly and time consuming.

Challenges for persons with disabilities may include:

- Untrained professional staff capable of informing and advising about accessibility issues.
- Inaccessible booking services and related websites.
- Lack of accessible transportation options.
- Unavailability of adapted and accessible hotel rooms, restaurants, shops, toilets and public places through access and displays and interpretation.
- Inaccessible streets and transport services.
- Unavailable information on accessible facilities, services, equipment rentals and tourist attractions.

### **Why is accessible tourism important?**

Accessibility is a central element of any responsible and sustainable development policy. It is both a human rights imperative, as well as an exceptional business opportunity. In this context, accessible tourism does not only benefit persons with disabilities, it benefits all of society.

To ensure that accessible tourism is developed in a sustainable manner requires that tourist destinations go beyond ad hoc services to adopting the principle of universal design, ensuring that all persons, regardless of their physical or cognitive needs, can use and enjoy the available amenities in an equitable and sustainable manner. This approach foregoes preferential or segregated treatment of differently abled constituents to permitting uninhibited use of facilities and services by all, at any time, to equitable effect. The improvements to physical and service infrastructure that come with a focus on accessibility also encourage a more multigenerational focus in development planning. For families with small children, accessible infrastructure – particularly in transportation, city planning and building design – improves the ability of these families to participate in social and cultural activities. Finger Lakes Visitors Connection is committed to sustainable and equitable development. Product development, education, and policy recommendations will be pursued to achieve a goal of accessibility for all. Making basic adjustments to a facility, providing accurate information, and understanding the needs of disabled people can result in increased visitor numbers. Improving the accessibility of tourism services increases their quality and their enjoyment for all tourists, as well as improving quality of life in the local communities.

### **Attachment 3. Reporting Document**

1. Project Overview Narrative – Status.
2. Project Completion, Evidence
  - a. Attach photos or documentation of “before and after”
3. Impact of changes (data)
  - a. # of Visitors served
  - b. Economic impact or ROI on investment
  - c. Quantity of positive press achieved through announcing improvements
  - d. Other
4. Impact of changes (anecdotal)
  - a. Stories, testimonials about how this made a difference in someone’s visit
5. Comments, other
6. Attach original proposal, financial budget sheets.