Marketing & Advertising RFP Questions & Answers Organized by Topic

Duplicate questions from repeated submissions have been merged. Where an answer was already provided in the RFP addendum, it's included below the question.

Section I. RFP Process, Timeline, Deliverables & Selection

1. Who is the incumbent, and how long has the agency been a partner?

   The organization underwent a leadership change last year after 41 years of one leader. To the best of knowledge, no previous Marketing agency was outsourced to-date for this organization. A local, graphic designer was on retainer for at least the last 15 years, but retired in December 2025. Sometimes regional and broader Finger Lakes initiatives were financially supported through a separate budget line item, but brand identity was not under Visit Finger Lakes but instead Ontario County.

2. What necessitated the advertising hiatus over the past several years?

   To be transparent, the CEO has been with Visit Finger Lakes for just over one year, so full history isn't available and frequent staff turnover previous to this past year means there isn't much institutional memory to draw on. Current understanding is that sustained paid advertising fell off amid budget and staffing constraints before COVID; marketing hasn't had dedicated staff capacity, and this kind of investment wasn't a funding priority for the organization in the past. Part of why we're building out data infrastructure now (Tourism Economics, CoStar) and launching this AOR search is to put the case and the systems in place to support sustained investment going forward, rather than another stop-start cycle.

3. Following the recent hiatus in paid media investment, are there past campaign learnings or insights you'd like the selected agency to build upon – or avoid?

   Because of staff turnover and the gap in sustained paid media, we don't have a strong archive of past campaign performance to draw specific lessons from. Our guidance is more directional: build from real data through our new Tourism Economics and CoStar partnerships rather than legacy assumptions, and help us establish the measurement discipline that wasn't consistently in place before. We're largely building forward, not course-correcting from a known playbook.

4. Are you selecting the Marketing AOR and PR agency concurrently? Is there any concern with the same agency submitting for both?

   Yes, the two RFPs are running concurrently, and there's no concern with the same agency submitting for both. We'd just ask that each proposal address its respective scope clearly and independently.

5. What characteristics or capabilities will distinguish the agency you ultimately select from other qualified firms?

   The qualities outlined in the RFP are what will set the right partner apart: genuine DMO experience, ideally with small-market destinations, grounded in data rather than a generic playbook; a dedicated, DMO-fluent account lead; independent thinking and a willingness to challenge our assumptions rather than just execute a brief; and transparency in reporting and billing. That aligns with how proposals are scored—experience and demonstrated results weigh heaviest, followed by scope of work and creative approach, personnel qualifications, and budget approach.

6. To what extent are you seeking speculative campaign/media recommendations in the written proposal versus an overview of approach, process, and experience? If we advance to interviews, should we bring a speculative creative concept, or is that more a conversation built around the submitted proposal?"

In the written proposal, we're not expecting a fully built speculative campaign—what we do want, consistent with the Proposal Requirements section of the RFP, is your strategic and creative approach and media philosophy: how you'd think about positioning, audiences, and channel strategy for Ontario County, demonstrated through relevant case studies and experience rather than executed creative. That's weighted heavily in our evaluation—overall experience and demonstrated results carry the most points, followed by scope of work understanding and creative approach. At the interview stage, we're expecting more of a conversation built around what you've already submitted, not a brand-new speculative concept. We also recognize this process has moved quickly, so we're not requiring creative concepts at either stage—but if your team feels ready and excited to bring one, we're glad to receive it at that level. The priority throughout is understanding how you think and work, not judging finished creative.

Section II. Engagement Timeline & Budget Period

1. Should proposals price the full engagement through December 2027, or focus on the FY27 budget period?

   Proposals should align with the longer window, September 1, 2026 through December 31, 2027, to match our county funding contract, with discovery work able to start as early as September 1. The FY27 fiscal year figures reflect year-one budget, not the full engagement period. We'd also note that, assuming future funding is secured, we expect this to be the start of a longer-term partnership of at least 2–3 additional years.

Section III. Strategic Plan Coordination & Sequencing

1. How do you envision the sequencing between the strategic plan in development and the marketing program — will the plan be completed early enough to shape strategy and media planning, or should the agency prepare for an initial phase running alongside the plan's development? Will the agency have input, or will the plan be handed down as a fixed brief?

   The strategic plan and the marketing contract will likely run in parallel during the initial phase, since the strategic planning process is kicking off at the same time. A completed, board-approved plan will not precede the start of planned media buys. This is viewed as an opportunity rather than a constraint: Visit Finger Lakes is looking for an agency comfortable operating in a discovery-oriented environment, able to begin building foundational knowledge of audiences, markets, and assets while remaining adaptive as the plan takes shape. Creative assistance is needed immediately (brand and creative concepts such as Tourism Tuesday invites, partnership materials, etc.). The agency is expected to participate in or be briefed on relevant strategic planning milestones/focus groups/workshops, and early marketing insights may inform the plan itself. Strategy and media planning should be formalized once the plan is further along, likely by the end of Q1 or early Q2 of the engagement.

2. What is the anticipated timeline for completion of the strategic plan?

   The engagement will begin September 1, 2026, with the primary work—stakeholder engagement, research, and planning—taking place before the end of the year. Work will pause over the holidays and into January 2027 to allow any newly elected officials to take office, at which point they will be re-engaged as part of the group. Deliverables are expected in February 2027, with approval to follow quickly and formal adoption targeted no later than March 1, 2027.

Section IV. Brand Strategy & Destination Positioning

1. Within the broader Finger Lakes region, which aspects of brand clarity or differentiation are most important to address first, and where's the greatest opportunity to strengthen Ontario County's distinct identity? How do you currently position Ontario County within the region, and what differentiators would you like future campaigns to emphasize? What do you see as the biggest perception or positioning challenges preventing Ontario County from becoming travelers' preferred overnight destination?

   The Finger Lakes brand is well-established at the regional level (wine country, lakes, outdoor beauty), but Ontario County often gets lost in that broader narrative. The most immediate brand challenge is helping visitors understand what makes Ontario County a distinct destination rather than simply a gateway to the wider region. The greatest opportunity lies in leaning into assets that are uniquely Ontario County's: Canandaigua Lake, Seneca Lake and the other Lakes as geographically located within Ontario County and listed in the RFP and its lakefront character, the Finger Lakes' original resort legacy, parks and open space, proximity to Rochester, agriculture, a growing culinary and craft beverage scene, main streets and villages, history, and a strong events calendar. The agency should prioritize a clear, ownable positioning that works in concert with – not in competition with – the regional brand. Visit Finger Lakes isn't starting from scratch, but does need sharper messaging that resonates with target audiences and translates consistently across paid, earned, and owned channels.

2. Should respondents assume refinement of existing positioning/messaging, development of a new destination positioning platform, or a more comprehensive brand strategy process? Is this a focused campaign positioning exercise, or a deeper brand platform exercise?

   Influencer and content creator sourcing will live on the marketing side, not with the PR agency. That said, we're a small team, and currently one person manages all content, both paid and earned, so in practice there's already close overlap between those functions. We want to preserve that collaboration going forward: marketing will continue to own sourcing and management, but the PR agency's input and perspective will be sought as those partnerships are identified and developed, particularly where there's overlap with earned media strategy or storytelling.

3. "Overall brand strategy and destination positioning" is included in the scope of work but isn't broken out in the fee allocation. How extensive do you see that part of the engagement being?

   This falls between the two ends of that spectrum, closer to developing a destination positioning platform than either a light refinement or a full rebrand. Ontario County isn't starting from scratch as the Finger Lakes brand is well established regionally, but the county-level positioning hasn't been clearly defined or consistently applied. We're looking for the strategic planning process to lead a focused positioning exercise: define what makes Ontario County distinct within the broader Finger Lakes brand (rather than competing with it), then this awarded agency translate that into a messaging framework, and make sure it holds up consistently across paid, earned, and owned channels. That said, this assumption holds only as long as it aligns with the concurrent strategic plan. Should that process surface a strong recommendation for a full rebrand, we'd expect the scope to expand accordingly, and we'd want the agency to be prepared to adapt.

4. Are there any brand assets or creative approaches that will remain relevant in the eyes of the board – the logo, website, etc.?

   Similar to the positioning question above, this is contingent on what the concurrent strategic plan surfaces. Barring a strong recommendation to the contrary, our expectation is that the Visit Finger Lakes logo and website remain in use, at least through year one. We're not anticipating a full identity overhaul alongside everything else in motion right now; the priority is sharpening how we *use and present these existing assets rather than replacing them. If the strategic plan does point toward a change, we'd expect the scope to adjust accordingly and want the agency prepared for that conversation. Another important note is that a website refresh is also going to be underway as our current website is not ranking for LLMs or competitive reach.*

5. Is there an existing brand guide or positioning framework the agency should build from, or is defining that part of what you're looking to the agency to lead?

   There is an existing brand guide, from October 2022, but it's dated and due for modernization, ideally built on the audience and market data we're now gathering through Tourism Economics and CoStar rather than assumption. You can find it here for reference: FLVC Brand Guidelines, October 2022. We see this less as a fixed foundation to build from and more as a starting reference. We're looking to the agency to lead the work of refreshing and modernizing it into a positioning framework grounded in current data, consistent with what we've described above.

Section V. Target Audiences & Priority Markets

1. How does Visit Finger Lakes currently define its priority target audiences, and are there specific traveler segments or visitor profiles it's seeking to grow or attract? Have priority visitor segments already been identified, or is the selected agency expected to recommend and validate audience priorities?

   It's been several years since Visit Finger Lakes has run sustained paid advertising, so priority segments aren't sharply defined today. The new data partnerships, Tourism Economics (Symphony) and CoStar, provide a real opportunity to build audience definitions together with the agency, grounded in actual data rather than assumption. The budget won't support deep penetration across many markets, and we are comfortable with that; doing one or two markets exceptionally well is preferred over spreading thin across many.

Section VI. Competitive Landscape

1. Beyond the competitive overlap of other Finger Lakes destinations, what organizations or destinations does Visit Finger Lakes view as its primary competitors for attracting overnight visitors?

   Beyond the obvious overlap with destinations within the region (Ithaca, Watkins Glen, and Corning), the primary competitive set includes the other Finger Lakes–branded charters: the Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council and the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance, which share a common perception of being one and the same as Visit Finger Lakes despite being different entities. Other Northeast leisure destinations competing for the same overnight visitor include the Hudson Valley, the Adirondacks, and the Thousand Islands region.

Section VII. Success Metrics, KPIs & Measurement

1. What outcomes would make the first year of this partnership unquestionably successful, from your perspective and from county stakeholders' perspective?

   A successful first year: a clear, agreed-upon brand platform and messaging framework in place; a media strategy executing against defined target audiences with measurable reach and engagement; a noticeable increase in Ontario County's digital footprint, campaign-attributed visitation, and lodging tax revenue compared to prior periods; and a collaborative, communicative working relationship grounded in mutual trust. From a county stakeholder perspective, visibility matters—elected officials and community partners want to see Ontario County showing up prominently in travel media, social platforms, and regional conversations.

Demonstrable ROI on the tourism investment, even directionally in year one, will be important, as is an agency that understands the stakeholder environment and helps tell the community's story with pride.

2. How do you define success for FY27, and are preferred KPIs, benchmarks, or reporting platforms/formats already defined – across overnight visitation, paid media, website, email/newsletter, creative performance, co-op campaigns, and visitation impact – or should the agency propose a measurement framework? What are the primary success metrics related to overnight visitation, and how are those currently measured (e.g., occupancy, room nights, occupancy tax, STR/lodging data, partner reporting, visitor surveys, website-assisted referrals, or modeled visitation)? Aside from overnight visitation, are there other KPIs, such as online conversions on visitfingerlakes.com?

   FY27 is a foundational year for measurement. Visit Finger Lakes has recently begun subscribing to Tourism Economics (Symphony) and CoStar occupancy data, providing a more rigorous lens on market performance than ever before; this kind of data wasn't previously supported or prioritized. Directional priorities are clear: move the needle on occupancy and demand, and support ADR growth with the hotelier community. Establishing reliable baselines is a meaningful part of this scope, and transparency will be key to winning over the elected officials who determine the funding model. We don't yet have a fixed KPI set or reporting cadence defined across every channel (paid media, website, email, creative, co-op) as that framework is something we expect to build together with the agency rather than hand down as-is. Beyond overnight visitation, traffic growth, and engagement on visitfingerlakes.com matter, but Visit Finger Lakes is also thinking critically about how AI is reshaping destination discovery and research, and what that means for defining success on the site going forward. There is no booking engine, so conversion in the traditional e-commerce sense isn't the right lens. Visit Finger Lakes is open to the agency's perspective on the right digital KPIs for this evolving landscape. Symphony allows for media attribution once paid efforts are in market.

3. What attribution or visitor-tracking tools are currently in place (e.g., Arrivalist, Zartico, STR, Datafy, or similar) to measure overnight visitation lift?

   We don't currently have a dedicated attribution or visitor-tracking platform like Arrivalist, Zartico, or Datafy in place. Our primary data tools today are Tourism Economics (Symphony), which will support media attribution once paid efforts are in market, and CoStar for occupancy and lodging performance. We're open to the agency's recommendation on whether a dedicated attribution or mobility-data tool would be a worthwhile addition to that stack, but not in year one as budget won't be able to support it.

4. Does Visit Finger Lakes currently analyze visitor flow between counties (day trips versus overnight stays), and would you be open to incorporating mobility data to better understand travel patterns?

   Yes, the Tourism Economics Symphony platform analyzes visitor flow, movement between counties, and the distinction between day trips and overnight stays. It does this by integrating mobile device data to track real-time visitor movement, segmenting visitor volume into day-trippers versus overnight guests, and mapping points of interest to trace visitor origin and cross-county movement patterns. We're already pulling this geolocation data into Symphony(as of July 1) and should be able to reference comparables against neighboring counties.

Section VIII. Existing Research, Data & Historical Performance

1. What existing brand strategy, traveler/audience research, perception studies, stakeholder input, campaign performance data, lodging/visitation data, or strategic

planning findings will be available to the selected agency? Is there existing positioning research, brand messaging, or audience data the agency would inherit?

Here's what exists today: an October 2022 brand guide (dated, and due for the modernization we discussed above); prior Annual Reports; occupancy and market performance data through our new CoStar subscription; and visitor volume, spending, and movement data through Tourism Economics (Symphony) through June 2026, which we're just beginning to build a real practice around. What we don't have is much in the way of formal perception studies, sustained audience research, or documented campaign performance as it's been several years since we ran sustained paid media, and that gap means there isn't a deep archive of tested messaging or performance learnings to hand over. Stakeholder input is soon being gathered now through the concurrent strategic planning process (interviews, focus groups, workshops), and we'd expect relevant findings to be shared with the agency as they emerge. In short: the agency won't be inheriting a fully built positioning or research foundation, but will have real data platforms to build one on, plus visibility into the strategic plan's stakeholder input as it develops.

2. If possible, could we see directional benchmarks before proposals are due – traffic, email list size, past campaign performance, or occupancy data?
   We can share what we have, though the depth is limited given our organization's recent transition. We're happy to share and provide updates as new data comes online. Reach out to alicia@visitfingerlakes.com for a recent monthly compilation report.

Section IX. CRM & Technology Platforms

1. Does Visit Finger Lakes currently utilize a CRM or customer data platform to manage visitor relationships, email communications, audience insights, or partner data?
   Visit Finger Lakes is contracted with Simpleview/Granicus, a respected leader in the tourism CRM (and CMS) space, and uses Act-On for email marketing management. Both are in place and operational. Audience insights come from the new data partnerships, Tourism Economics (Symphony) and CoStar, as well as Act-On Performance.

2. What does the in-house team currently handle day-to-day – social media, email, or web updates? Beyond Bynder and Simpleview/Granicus, what other platforms are you working in?

   There isn't a dedicated in-house marketing/advertising staff member today, but our current PR & Content Associate handles day-to-day social and email, and Partnership Specialist handles web updates. Our staff roster is included here; please note that it will be updated after July 11 following a retirement. Beyond Bynder and Simpleview/Granicus (which covers our CRM, CMS, and SEO), our current platform stack includes CrowdRiff for UGC and the Creators program, basic Meta for social, CoStar and Tourism Economics (Symphony) for data, Google Analytics, Canva currently for creative, and Cvent for meetings leads and insights. We'd expect the selected agency to plug into this stack rather than build one from scratch, though we're open to recommendations on where it can evolve with budget support for year two.

Section X. Scope of Work & Division of Labor

1. We'd like to confirm that management of social media (organic and paid) is outside the day-to-day scope of this RFP – and if so, would any of those elements potentially move to the new Agency of Record scope?

   To clarify: paid social falls within the agency's media planning and buying scope, consistent with other paid channels. Organic, day-to-day social media management–posting, community *management—is currently moving in-house October 1 at a basic level and isn't part of the core AOR scope for year one. That said, the future of social media (whether some or all of organic social) could shift into the agency's scope as the relationship develops beyond year one or at the time the incoming CEO chooses to seek request for proposals with a dedicated scope of work for this area.*

2. Which functions are currently handled in-house versus expected from the agency across strategy, creative, media planning/buying, email/newsletter strategy, website support, reporting, influencer strategy, cooperative advertising, and partner coordination?

   Here's the breakdown as we see it:

   - *Strategy – agency-led, developed in close collaboration with us and informed by the concurrent strategic plan as it develops.*
   - *Creative – agency-led, built primarily from our existing Bynder/CrowdRiff asset library and supplemented by the $35K net-new asset development budget.*
   - *Media planning/buying – agency-led, across paid channels including paid social.*
   - *Email/newsletter – our platform (Act-On) is already in place; we're looking to the agency for strategy, as our in-house team can execute and provide reports.*
   - *Website support – "light" support only (graphics, copy) layered on top of Granicus/Simpleview, which continues to own core CMS, hosting, and the SEO optimization of blogs and a contract.*
   - *Reporting – agency-led, with transparent, consistent monthly reporting.*
   - *Influencer strategy – agency-led; identifying and recommending influencers is explicitly part of the scope. Coordination with PR agency for any cross-over media with traditional PR efforts.*
   - *Cooperative advertising – shared; our internal partnership lead manages relationships day-to-day, with the agency providing guidance and support to structure, solicit, and manage the program.*
   - *Partner coordination – shared; the agency serves as strategic lead, with day-to-day coordination supported internally through a single point of contact.*

Section XI. Media Strategy, Channels & Campaign Structure

1. How important is it that media buying be handled fully in-house by the selected agency versus through a specialized external partner, and how do you evaluate the strengths of each model?

   This is not a firm requirement; Visit Finger Lakes is open to either model. What matters most is transparency, accountability, and results, as well as working within the budget allotted. Outsourcing this part likely incurs more fees and less dollars spent purely on paid media. We know some of the most effective DMO campaigns are executed through agencies that partner with specialized media buying firms, particularly for programmatic, DOOH, or national broadcast placements where scale and negotiating leverage matter. Fee transparency in reporting is important. At the same time, Visit Finger Lakes values a single point of accountability and wants to avoid a fragmented experience where strategy and execution feel disconnected. If a respondent proposes an external media buying partner, the proposal should clearly describe the relationship, how it's managed, how costs are structured, and how performance is reported back. Each model will be evaluated on its merits.

2. The RFP references identifying opportunities beyond social media boosts and Google placements. Can you elaborate on the current media mix and where you see the greatest opportunity for expansion? Are there specific channels or media approaches you'd particularly like agencies to explore?

   Our recent media mix has been minimal and tactical, largely social boosts and Google placements, a byproduct of the multi-year pause in dedicated media investment. This $200K represents a real reset, and we're not wedded to any particular channel. We're open to the agency's recommendation across the full mix: programmatic, CTV/OTT, out-of-home, print, and partner/co-op placements, grounded in the audience and market data we're now building through Symphony and CoStar. The one thing we'd flag is that whatever's proposed should have a credible line to our shoulder-season and overnight-visitation goals.

3. For FY27, should respondents assume the paid media program will be made up of several smaller campaigns tied to seasons, events, partner opportunities, and audience segments, or fewer, larger integrated campaigns with broader seasonal flighting? How many major campaign efforts should agencies assume for FY27?

   Given this is a foundational year with a modest budget, our instinct is to lean toward a central creative platform with flexible seasonal or event-based flights, rather than a large number of fully distinct campaigns, but we're not locked into that, and we'd rather have the agency's recommendation on the right structure once audience and seasonal priorities are clearer. Whatever's proposed should be manageable for a lean internal team to support.

4. Which months or need periods are most important for shoulder-season growth, and what traveler behaviors matter most (first-time visitation, repeat visitation, longer length of stay, event attendance, itinerary engagement, etc.)? What do you see as the key drivers of shoulder-season visitation?

   Summer and fall already drive the bulk of our demand (but yes there IS room to improve here too), so shoulder season for us skews toward late fall through early spring, roughly November through April – where we have some (Tap & Craft Festival, Christkindl Market, Festival of Lights, Fire & Ice Festival, Maple Weekends) but visitation still trails. Event attendance, itinerary engagement, and overnight stays tied to those events are the behaviors we care most about in this window. We're open to the agency's data-driven recommendation on which specific months and behaviors to prioritize once baseline measurement is in place.

5. As a fee-free media company – no additional charges for agency services or creative – should we still work within the $200K/$343K budget, or can we expand media spend given that structure? Relatedly, do you have usable B-roll for a small CTV allocation (e.g., via Azira/Amazon, aligned with our Tourism Economics partnership)?

   Our published FY27 allocations ($200K media, $108K agency fees, $35K asset development) reflect board-approved figures, and we'd want any proposal – fee-inclusive or fee-free – to work within that overall framework rather than requesting an expanded top-line budget. That said, we're genuinely interested in models that put more dollars toward media, so if a fee-free structure lets you deliver additional value within the existing total, we'd welcome seeing that clearly laid out. On video: we don't have vetted B-roll ready for a CTV package today as our existing footage is limited, which is part of why we've earmarked the $35K for new asset development. If usable footage emerges as we build out our Bynder library, we're happy to share what we have.

6. Is the county mandating the specific breakout of budget between media and agency fee? (One respondent noted a preference to allocate more of the agency fee toward media and, unless told otherwise, to keep fees around 25–30%.)

The $200K media / $108K fee split in the RFP is our estimate, not a hard mandate—we've encouraged respondents to propose scalable models that flex within the overall $343K FY27 investment, and final allocations will be confirmed in collaboration with the selected agency before contract execution. A 25–30% fee-to-media ratio is within a reasonable, industry-typical range, so we wouldn't object to that framing by default. What matters most to us is that whatever split you propose is transparent, clearly justified by the scope of work and deliverables, and doesn't come at the expense of the strategic and creative leadership we need—we'd rather see a well-reasoned rebalancing than a fee minimized just to shift dollars to media.

7. Within the $108,000 agency fee allocation, are there services you consider highest priority – for example, media planning/buying, account management, creative development, reporting, email strategy, or website support?

   Highest priority is dedicated account leadership and strategic direction—a named lead with genuine DMO fluency who can operate as a true strategic partner, not just an executor. Media planning and buying comes right behind that, since it's the core of what this engagement is funding. Creative development is also front-of-mind, given we have immediate needs (brand-aligned materials, partnership collateral, campaign concepts) that can't wait for the strategic plan to finish. Transparent, consistent reporting matters throughout, but it's the connective tissue rather than a standalone priority. Email strategy and website support are explicitly framed as lighter-touch in this scope—valuable, but not where we'd expect the bulk of the fee allocation to go. We're open to your recommendation on exact hours/allocation across these, as long as the priority order above is reflected.

Section XII. Cooperative Advertising Program

1. Can you describe the co-op program's structure – typical partner types, participation levels, and performance expectations? Is there an existing program today, and how many partners typically participate? How many partners should agencies assume for planning purposes, and are there priority categories (lodging, attractions, wineries, events, restaurants, outdoor recreation, municipalities)? What changes or enhancements do you hope the AOR brings?"

   To be clear, this is a new initiative for us so there isn't an existing, formalized co-op program with a track record to point to; building that framework is part of what we're asking the agency to help do. Based on conversations to-date, likely priority categories include lodging, wineries/craft beverage producers, attractions, and event organizers, but we don't have a fixed partner list or headcount target. For planning purposes, assuming somewhere in the 6–10 partner range is a reasonable starting point, though we'd rather have a smaller, deeper partner set that performs well than a large one that's thin. What we're hoping the agency brings is a simple, transparent framework to help our in-house Partnership Specialist with partner buy in, what they receive, and how performance gets reported back – since none of that exists formally today.

2. Can you clarify what the 50/50 cooperative advertising structure means, whether there's a max spend for any one partner, and whether the $50,000 cap refers to total partner investment, VFL's matching contribution, or a per-partner cap?

   The 50/50 structure means partners contribute matching dollars alongside Visit Finger Lakes—for every dollar a partner puts in, Visit Finger Lakes matches it, up to a total Visit Finger Lakes contribution of $50,000 across the program. So the $50,000 cap is Visit Finger Lakes' total matching contribution across all participating partners, not a per-partner cap, and not the combined partner total (which, fully matched, could reach up to $100,000 in combined spend). No single partner would be guaranteed a fixed allocation or awarded the full $200K media budget; co-op is one component within that larger allocation. This allows our smaller partners to *be part of a campaign and in a market outside of their normal footprint of very local. We're open to the agency's recommendation on how to size individual partner contributions within that overall cap.*

3. What level of strategic oversight and day-to-day management is expected for the co-op program? Should the agency manage partner invoicing and reporting, or will Visit Finger Lakes handle financial administration internally?

   Our internal partnership lead manages partner relationships day-to-day, but we're looking to the agency for real strategic oversight—helping structure the offering and manage execution and performance reporting once dollars are in. On invoicing specifically, we'd want the agency to own reporting and performance tracking; Visit Finger Lakes handles financial administration (invoicing, collecting partner payments.

4. Roughly what share of the $200,000 media allocation is co-op-dependent versus directly controlled by Visit Finger Lakes?

   In a fully-subscribed scenario, co-op represents up to $50,000 of Visit Finger Lakes' match within the $200,000 media allocation – roughly a quarter – with the remaining $150,000-plus directly controlled by Visit Finger Lakes. Since partner participation isn't yet committed, treat that co-op share as a ceiling rather than a guaranteed figure. We'd expect the agency to build a strong, directly-controlled media plan that doesn't depend on co-op dollars materializing. But this is an important opportunity for FLVC to show how we support county-wide tourism assets bottom line.

Section XIII. Creative & Visual Asset Development

1. For the $35K in visual asset development, which types of deliverables do you anticipate needing most in the first year?

   The highest-priority needs are photography and short-form video that FLVC owns (with advertising rights) and that reflects the authentic, contemporary character of Ontario County – the lake, downtown Geneva & Canandaigua experiences, seasonal outdoor recreation, culinary moments, and the visitors Visit Finger Lakes is trying to attract. Existing assets are dated or lack the lifestyle-forward aesthetic that performs well in digital/social. Beyond hero imagery and video, Visit Finger Lakes anticipates needing social-ready content in multiple formats/aspect ratios, plus a modest set of evergreen destination visuals to anchor paid media, the website, and partner co-op opportunities. Visit Finger Lakes is open to the agency's recommendation on budget allocation and welcomes a phased asset development plan that prioritizes immediate campaign needs while building toward a more comprehensive library over time.

2. Can we get access to the Bynder asset library (or a representative sample) prior to proposal submission to assess creative inventory and identify gaps?

   Visit Finger Lakes is in the middle of setting up its Bynder DAM, with assets going in by end of July; once launched, the agency will have full access. A formal library preview isn't available ahead of that, but hero shots can be shared for the proposal. Creative inventory has real gaps—there hasn't been a major asset shoot in a few years. Some content around festivals and history has been captured over the past year, but Visit Finger Lakes is not coming into this with a deep, ready-to-go library.

3. Given the existing Bynder library and CrowdRiff Creators program, should respondents assume campaign creative will primarily adapt existing/incoming assets, or include more robust net-new development?"

   Building on what we shared above: CrowdRiff is one of the ways we're sourcing local, UGC-style content, and we see it as a helpful supplement rather than a substitute for more curated hero *photography and video. We'd expect campaign creative to be a blend—adapting Bynder and CrowdRiff assets for always-on and social content, while directing the $35K in net-new development toward higher-value hero imagery and video that doesn't exist today. Given the size of that budget, we're not expecting a large volume of net-new production—more a handful of targeted, high-impact shoots layered onto the asset base CrowdRiff and Bynder provide.*

4. For FY27 campaigns, should primary calls to action generally drive to VisitFingerLakes.com, specific landing pages, partner pages, itineraries, events, lodging content, email capture, or a mix of all the above?

   We'd expect a mix, driven by campaign intent rather than a single default destination. Since we don't have a booking engine, the CTA isn't about conversion in the e-commerce sense—it's about moving people toward planning and, ideally, capturing them as a first-party contact for future marketing. That likely means campaign or seasonal landing pages and itinerary/event content for top-of-funnel awareness, partner and lodging pages when tied to co-op placements, and email capture as a consistent secondary CTA across campaigns given how thin our list-building has been in recent years. We're open to the agency's recommendation on the right mix and would want it tied to how we're measuring success on the site going forward.

Section XIV. Website Support

1. Is 'light website support' limited to design/content optimization, or does it include technical development and SEO integration? What's most likely needed, what remains with Granicus/Simpleview or the VFL team, and will the agency have access to the CMS, hosting environment, codebase, GA4, Google Tag Manager, Search Console, Simpleview reporting, or CRM/email data? Is there a staging environment to preview changes?"

   Light' is the operative word. We're not looking for technical development or a rebuild (one is going underway with contracted vendor). In practice, that means graphics and visual styling to support key pages, along with supplemental some copywriting and proofing that falls outside what's already covered under our Granicus/Simpleview SEO contract. Core CMS administration, hosting, and any backend/codebase work stay with Granicus/Simpleview or our internal team—that's not part of the agency's scope. For access: we'd expect the agency to have visibility into GA4, Google Tag Manager, and Search Console, since that ties directly to media performance and reporting, along with CMS access sufficient to make the content-level updates described above. We'll confirm the specifics of our staging environment and exact CMS permissions as part of onboarding, but flag now that any website work should assume a review step before anything goes live.

Section XV. Email & Newsletter Marketing

1. For email/newsletter, are you looking for strategy and recommendations only, or hands-on execution as well – writing, design, build, deployment, and reporting?

   Strategy. We have in-house staff that should be able to continue executing, so we're looking to the agency to support with strategy and writing, working within our existing Act-On platform. (For the equivalent website question, see the website support scope answer above – that support stays at the content/design level, not technical build.)

2. What is the approximate size and composition of the email database, what segmentation or automation is in place, and what role does email/newsletter marketing play in marketing amplification today?

Under 15,000 contacts currently as it just went through a clean-up when switching from Mailchimp to Act-on in June 2026. Consumer list is primarily leisure based and candidly, our email program hasn't been developed with much sophistication in recent years—segmentation and automation are minimal to none today, and email plays a modest amplification role, regularly monthly partner/stakeholder communications and consumer newsletters have been consistent for 14 months now. We're looking to the agency to help us build real segmentation, automation, and a more strategic role for email as part of this engagement, properly using A/B testing and strategies for better engagement.

Section XVI. Influencer Strategy

1. Will Visit Finger Lakes provide existing influencer relationships and guidelines, or should the agency propose a full influencer recruitment framework?

   A bit of both, leaning toward the latter. Influencer identification and vetting has been handled entirely in-house to-date, given our small team, but we don't have a formal program—we've hosted a handful of creators, without an established compensation model or documented guidelines to hand over. So we can share what limited relationships and experience exist, but we're really looking to the agency to propose a full influencer recruitment framework: a vetting process, KPI priorities, and a recommendation on how a paid compensation model is best measured and consistent. Directionally, we'd prioritize third-party credibility and strong content (photo/video) over pure backlink value, given our current focus on brand-building and awareness. One coordination note: we also have a separate PR RFP in market, and our intent is for influencer sourcing and management to sit with the marketing AOR rather than the PR agency, with the PR agency weighing in where there's overlap with earned media or storytelling.

Section XVII. Regional Partnerships

1. Is there synergy between the bordering counties of Ontario County, specifically Livingston and Yates? Has Ontario County partnered with Livingston or Yates in the past on PR/marketing initiatives??

   There's informal synergy given our shared geography and overlapping visitor experience, but no formal history of joint PR or marketing initiatives solely with Livingston or Yates counties to-date. Rather Cayuga County there has been and of course within the Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council initiative. We'd be open to the agency identifying cross-county collaboration opportunities—especially for itinerary content or shared events—as long as it doesn't dilute Ontario County's distinct identity within the broader Finger Lakes brand.

Section XVIII. Administration

1. Who on the Visit Finger Lakes staff will be the day-to-day contact, and what is their capacity?

   At present, the outgoing CEO has the most marketing experience on the team and as the future transition comes into play, there won't be a dedicated marketing-minded staff member unless one is hired. The organization is in a moment of transition, and incoming leadership will have to consider bringing on a marketing-savvy team member to serve as day-to-day point of contact or handling it themselves. Regardless of how the internal structure evolves, the agency will serve as strategic lead and visionary on this work—Visit Finger Lakes is not looking for a partner to execute against its direction, but a partner to help set it. Day-to-day coordination will be supported internally, but creative and strategic ownership rests with the agency.

2. Who will provide final approvals, and how should the agency expect to work across Visit Finger Lakes stakeholders, co-op partners, tourism organizations, vendors, and other external groups — channeled through one VFL contact, or direct coordination with multiple partners/decision-makers?"

   Building on the contact structure described above: final approvals will always run through CEO even if the day-to-day lead differs and with board-level sign-off on major strategic or budget decisions as needed. For external coordination, we'd generally prefer approvals and activity to be channeled through that single Visit Finger Lakes contact rather than the agency coordinating directly with multiple partners or decision-makers independently. That said, we recognize some direct coordination will be practical and necessary — for example, internal co-op partnership lead will be the Partnership Specialist; another is with Granicus/Simpleview on website-related items — and we're comfortable with that as long as we stay looped in and it doesn't create conflicting direction.