

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. Stakeholder Engagement - Scope, Composition & Sessions

1. For the stakeholder engagement process, can you share the approximate size and composition of the stakeholder universe (board, staff, county officials, industry partners, community members)?

The stakeholder universe for this engagement is approximately 50-75 individuals across the following groups: the Visit Finger Lakes (FLVC) Board of Directors (17 members), the Ontario County Board of Supervisors (21 members), Visit Finger Lakes staff (4), key county officials (2-3), economic development representatives (2), and additional stakeholders representing tourism, education, healthcare, downtown business improvement districts, and other key industries within the Ontario County business community. The exact composition of each engagement group will be defined collaboratively with the selected agency as part of the project's initial scoping and selection process.

2. How many key client stakeholders/project owners will exist on this project?

Project ownership will be led by Visit Finger Lakes' both outgoing and incoming CEO, along with one dedicated staff member. A small hand-selected committee of county industry partners representing tourism (hotel and both large and small attractions) and economic development (county and college) will assist and review proposals and help establish the engagement framework and focus groups, with the dedicated staff member serving as the primary point of contact and leading the group day to day.

3. You mention a potentially broad range of engagement methods for stakeholders – including interviews, focus groups, and workshops. How many of these sessions do you envision? 1x per stakeholder group? More? What level of in-person engagement is expected at minimum (for example, key workshops and board presentations), and is virtual participation acceptable for the remaining activities such as interviews and some focus groups?

We anticipate at least one round of engagement per defined stakeholder group, with the possibility of additional sessions for the Visit Finger Lakes Board of Directors and the Ontario County Board of Supervisors given their central role in the approval process. In-person workshops will be most beneficial for stakeholder groups for best engagement. For the broader project committee, we are open to a hybrid approach, leaning on virtual/digital formats where it supports efficiency and broader participation for the schedule at-hand. Economic Development just went through this process and will be integral in sharing their findings for best practices within this community, bringing their value to this project invaluable.

Section II. Governance, Board & County Approval Process

1. If you have more detail on the expected approval process, that would be helpful. Who do you anticipate having a "voice vs. a vote" in the process?

The project committee described in Section 1 will serve as the primary body with both voice and vote throughout the process, from proposal selection through implementation. Both the Visit Finger Lakes Board of Directors and the Ontario County Board of Supervisors are critically important to this process; however, we anticipate they will place their trust in the credibility and judgment of the committee, as the committee and this process composition ensures they feel

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heard and represented throughout. Their full support remains essential and critical to the plan's successful adoption and eventual implementation.

2. Beyond the final presentation to the Visit Finger Lakes Board and the Ontario County Board of Supervisors, are there additional approval steps (e.g., county legislative committee review) required for formal adoption, and what is the expected timeline from delivery to adoption?

There are no additional formal approval steps beyond the final presentations to the Visit Finger Lakes Board of Directors and the Ontario County Board of Supervisors. 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.

3. Board and County involvement: How do you envision the respective roles of the Visit Finger Lakes Board of Directors and the Ontario County Board of Supervisors during the planning process? Should they be engaged equally, or should the Visit Finger Lakes Board be considered the primary stakeholder group, with the County Board playing a more secondary role?

Both the Visit Finger Lakes Board of Directors and the Ontario County Board of Supervisors should be engaged equally throughout the planning process. Neither group should be considered primary or secondary; both bring essential perspective and both will play a meaningful role in the plan's eventual adoption and long-term success.

Section III. Data, Research, Analytics

1. What existing organizational, marketing, tourism, and industry data will be available to the selected consultant (e.g., advertising performance data, website and social media analytics, media/PR coverage, press trip or travel trade activity, hotel performance data, economic impact reports, visitation data, attraction attendance, visitor profile research, stakeholder surveys, or other relevant research)?

We can share what we have, though the depth is limited given our organization's recent transition. That includes our LinkedIn-tracked earned media coverage and the highlights compiled in our annual report, along with the CoStar occupancy data and Tourism Economics (Symphony) data we've just begun subscribing to. Our STR and geolocation tracking only went live June 1, 2026, so historical visitor and lodging data prior to that is limited—data simply wasn't prioritized by the organization before its leadership transition at the end of 2025. 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.

Once contracted, the selected agency will have access to monthly executive summary reports covering web traffic, points of interest data, economic impact, hotel occupancy, ADR, RevPAR, supply/demand trends, ad impressions, and meta performance—giving the agency a regular, consistent data cadence to inform and optimize PR efforts throughout the engagement.

2. How should proposers interpret the research and analytics component of the scope? Should the focus be on using existing data, stakeholder input, and relevant industry research to inform the strategic plan, or is Visit Finger Lakes also seeking new analytics, tools, or reporting structures to help evaluate success during implementation?

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Proposers should focus primarily on existing data, stakeholder input, and relevant industry and state research to inform the strategic plan, rather than proposing new analytics tools or reporting structures. Visit Finger Lakes' recent investments in Tourism Economics (Symphony) and CoStar occupancy data, along with stakeholder engagement findings and broader industry/state research, should serve as the foundation for the plan's recommendations.

Section IV. Planning Process, Deliverables & Transparency

1. Would Visit Finger Lakes be open to a full-day or two half-days, in-person strategic planning retreat midway through the process, once research and stakeholder engagement findings are available, to allow leadership, board, and/or staff to work through core elements of the strategic plan together?

Yes. Visit Finger Lakes is open to a full-day or two half-days, in-person strategic planning retreat midway through the process, once research and stakeholder engagement findings are available. This would be a valuable opportunity for leadership, board, and staff to work through the core elements of the strategic plan together.

2. What are your expectations for the final plan format – for example, an internal implementation tool, a public-facing document, a presentation deck, or some combination?

As outlined in the RFP, the final plan should be a polished, visually engaging document that functions as an internal implementation tool, including actionable timelines, performance indicators, and resource guidance. In addition, the plan will need to serve as a public-facing document, and a presentation deck version should be developed for use with the Visit Finger Lakes Board, the Ontario County Board of Supervisors and key community partners.

3. Is there a current or prior strategic plan this engagement builds on or replaces, and if so, can it be shared with proposers?

Yes. Visit Finger Lakes' prior strategic plans and visioning documents are publicly available and can be reviewed at: <https://www.visitfingerlakes.com/about-us/flvc-strategic-plans/>. It's worth noting that the organization's 40-year leadership transitioned out in late 2025, and work on a new strategic plan had not yet begun at that time, nor was it budgeted for. This created a gap between that transition and the present engagement, which this RFP is intended to close. This engagement is expected to build on and update the prior body of work, noting the evolution the organization has experienced since the leadership change in late 2025.

4. Will the strategic planning work intersect with or help inform the PR and media buying services that are also being put out to RFP?

Yes. We want to be transparent that the strategic planning, PR, and media buying contracts will likely run in parallel during the initial phase of this engagement, as all three will be kicking off around the same time. A completed, board-approved strategic plan will not precede the start of planned media buys. We view this as an opportunity rather than a constraint, and we're looking for the other RFPs to find partners who are comfortable operating in a discovery-oriented environment—one that can begin building foundational knowledge of our audiences, markets, and assets while remaining adaptive as the plan takes shape. We expect the marketing and PR agency partners to participate in, or be briefed on, relevant strategic planning milestones, and we anticipate that early marketing insights may in turn help inform the plan itself.

Section V. Budget, Travel & Insurance

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1. Should travel and related expenses be included within the \$30,000 not-to-exceed budget, or are they reimbursed separately?

Travel and related expenses should be included within the \$30,000 not-to-exceed budget; they will not be reimbursed separately. We strongly recommend that proposers break out anticipated travel costs as a distinct line item within their proposal, clearly showing how much of the overall budget is being reserved for travel. Where feasible, FLVC will look to partner with local hotel for any complimentary accommodations or discounted rates, recognizing the support of our industry working together.

2. Could you confirm the insurance the selected consultant would be required to carry, including the types of coverage (for example, general liability and professional liability/errors and omissions) and any minimum coverage limits?

The selected consultant will be required to carry standard commercial insurance coverage, including: Commercial General Liability (\$1,000,000 per occurrence / \$2,000,000 aggregate); Professional Liability / Errors & Omissions (\$1,000,000 per claim / \$2,000,000 aggregate); Workers' Compensation & Employer's Liability (statutory limits, with \$1,000,000 typically required for Employer's Liability); and Business Automobile Liability (\$1,000,000 combined single limit, if applicable). Cyber Liability (\$1,000,000), is strongly recommended, given the potential handling of stakeholder data and potential virtual meetings. Visit Finger Lakes will confirm final coverage requirements and limits with the selected firm prior to contract execution.

3. The RFP indicates that the selected firm may be required to provide proof of insurance. Kindly confirm whether equivalent professional liability insurance issued outside the United States would be acceptable for international firms.

Yes. Equivalent professional liability insurance issued by a non-U.S. insurer is generally acceptable, provided it meets the same minimum coverage limits outlined above and is issued by an insurer with a comparable financial strength rating (e.g., an A.M. Best equivalent or similar recognized international rating). The policy must remain in effect for the full duration of the contract, name Finger Lakes Visitors Connection as an additional insured where applicable, and provide proof of coverage in English with limits stated in U.S. dollars. FLVC reserves the right to request a U.S.-admitted policy if coverage terms or the insurer's rating cannot be adequately verified.

Section VI. International Firm Eligibility & Remote/On-site Logistics

1. The RFP does not specifically mention any restriction regarding participation by international firms. Kindly confirm whether companies incorporated outside the United States, including Indian companies, are eligible to participate directly in this RFP. If yes, kindly advise whether any additional legal, tax, insurance, or contractual requirements are applicable to international firms.

Yes. Companies incorporated outside the United States are welcome to participate directly in this RFP. International firms should be prepared to meet the legal, tax, insurance, and contractual requirements outlined in this RFP and any addendums before contract awarding. Any additional or firm-specific requirements will be confirmed with the selected firm prior to contract award, in consultation with legal counsel.

2. The Scope of Work includes stakeholder engagement, workshops, presentations, and meetings; however, the RFP does not specify whether physical presence at Visit Finger Lakes' office is mandatory. Is physical on-site presence required at any stage of the project?

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Yes, physical on-site presence is required at various stages of the project. As outlined in the Stakeholder Engagement section above, in-person engagement is expected at minimum for key workshops and board presentations involving the Visit Finger Lakes Board of Directors and the Ontario County Board of Supervisors. On-site presence for these and other core engagement activities is mandatory, though some components such as individual interviews or select focus groups may be conducted virtually where appropriate.

Section VII. Leadership Transition

1. Given the recently announced leadership transition, how does Visit Finger Lakes envision current leadership participating in the planning process? Is an interim or new CEO expected to be involved during the engagement, and should the process be designed in part to support organizational continuity through that transition?

A successor is already identified and begins August 3. They'll be sitting in on final agency presentations and will be a cohesive part of both the selection process and discovery meetings, ensuring continuity through a full hand-off rather than a fresh start with an unfamiliar incoming leader.

2. Is Visit Finger Lakes interested in the strategic planning process serving as a tool to help align board, staff, and stakeholders during the leadership transition, in addition to producing the final strategic plan?

Yes. We see this process as an important opportunity to align the Board(s), staff, and stakeholders around one cohesive, jointly decided strategic approach, grounded in data, as both FLVC and Ontario County continue through another round of leadership transition and destination growth. The organization has evolved significantly over the past year, moving beyond its 40-year history as a visitors/information center to a true destination management organization, with expanded focus on marketing, destination stewardship, and community alignment.