

# Hello, Visit Buffalo Niagara Tourism

▶ August 2, 2024

**mower**

# Executive Summary

Dear Karen and Team,

Thank you for inviting Mower to respond to your RFP for destination branding, marketing and advertising services. We have also accepted the invitation to bid for public relations services. Given Mower's deep, integrated experience in travel and tourism marketing, we are confident that we can partner with you on a program that increases visitor interest, overnight bookings and spending.

Visit Buffalo Niagara has been on our radar for quite some time, and we are delighted at the prospect of working with you. As proud Buffalonians, we already wave the flag of loyalty as ambassadors for the region. Many of our Buffalo born-and-raised colleagues who left for college or career opportunities have returned to the Queen City, yielding to the strong pull of the place they call home. Mower's work here encompasses tourism assets including Darwin Martin House, Maid of the Mist, Explore & More and Canalside. Our long history of destination marketing has spanned the globe, inclusive of Nantucket, St. Lucia and Singapore.

Mower's broad footprint throughout New York State, including Syracuse, Rochester, Albany and New York City, gives us valuable insight into competitive markets. We also have colleagues based in Ohio, Michigan, and elsewhere in the East and Midwest, giving Mower long corridors to other locations.

Like you, we feel that the Buffalo Niagara region "has arrived" as a compelling, attractive destination with an abundance of riches to share. We look forward to working with you to create a strategic and cohesive campaign that will drive business to the region, give visitors experiences that create lasting memories and turn guests into brand ambassadors, or, what we like to call "fierce friends".

We are eager to put Mower's award-winning thinking and creativity to work for Visit Buffalo Niagara. We hope that this proposal leads to an in-person presentation in a few weeks' time.

Sincerely,



*Mary Gendron*

SVP, Travel & Tourism Co-Lead

mgendron@mower.com  
212.980.9065

# ▣▣ About Mower

## Fiercely Independent.

As an independent, 100% employee-owned agency, our priorities are our clients and our employees, not shareholders.

**25**

YEARS IN BUFFALO

**140+**

EMPLOYEES

WOMEN-LED  
**ESOP**

POWERHOUSE



CITIES

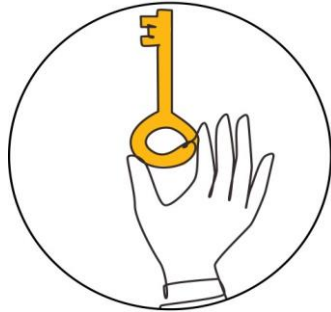
**56**

YEARS IN SERVICE

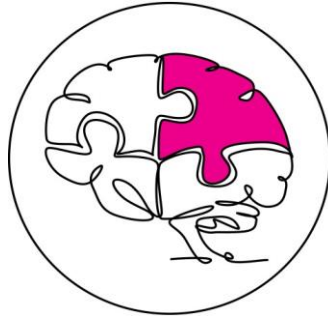


AWARD-WINNING TRAVEL  
AND TOURISM EXPERTISE

# Our Values



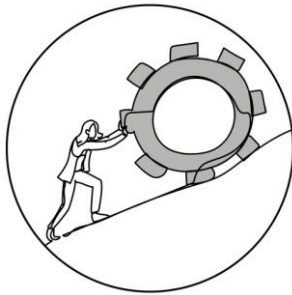
**Act like an owner.**



**Be insatiably curious.**



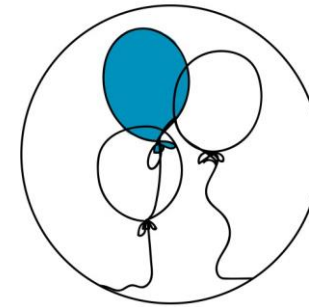
**Always raise the bar.**



**Never give up.**



**Put community first.**



**Have fun.**

# Mission Statement and Commitment to DE&I



## Making Fierce Friends

**More loyal customers**

**Better customer lifetime value**

**Brand advocates and promoters**

Our mission is to create authentic and enduring personal connections built on a foundation of affection, relevance and trust. Making Fierce Friends™ is our proprietary approach for passionate brands who want to establish deeper, more meaningful relationships with their constituents.

## Mower's DE&I commitment

- Holding unconscious bias training for all team members
- Conducting employee surveys on social justice
- Celebrating Pride Month by creating custom Mower branding on our website, social media channels and email signatures
- Taking part in the 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge
- Creating the award-winning "Open Every Door" pro bono campaign for One Hundred Black Men of New York
- Designating MLK Jr Day and Juneteenth as days of service
- Developing and utilizing a growing database of vendors owned by people of color and women

**MBE production spending – 3x over 2022 goal**

# Travel & Tourism Practice

**40+ years**

Travel & Tourism: An area of focus for more than 40 years with experienced integrated marketing teams.



A deep understanding of Travel & Tourism audiences, both B2B and B2C with award-winning results.



Mower fields its own industry-related research and attends key industry events and tradeshows, like NYSTIA Tourism Conference, PRSA Travel & Tourism Section Conference, and the Destinations International Annual Convention.



Follows and understands key micro- and macro-trends impacting the industry.

# ▣▣ A Few of our Best Friends in Travel & Tourism

## Experience:



MUSEUM ASSOCIATION  
OF NEW YORK

visit  
Westchester  
County ny



PEBBLE BEACH  
RESORTS



SOFITEL  
HOTELS & RESORTS

Turning Stone  
RESORT | CASINO



C-I-E TOURS  
International

THE  
LAKE HOUSE  
ON CANANDAIGUA



Lufthansa

## Travel & Tourism Awards:



DESTINATIONS COUNCIL  
DESTINY AWARDS



AWARDS  
2023 Agency of the Year



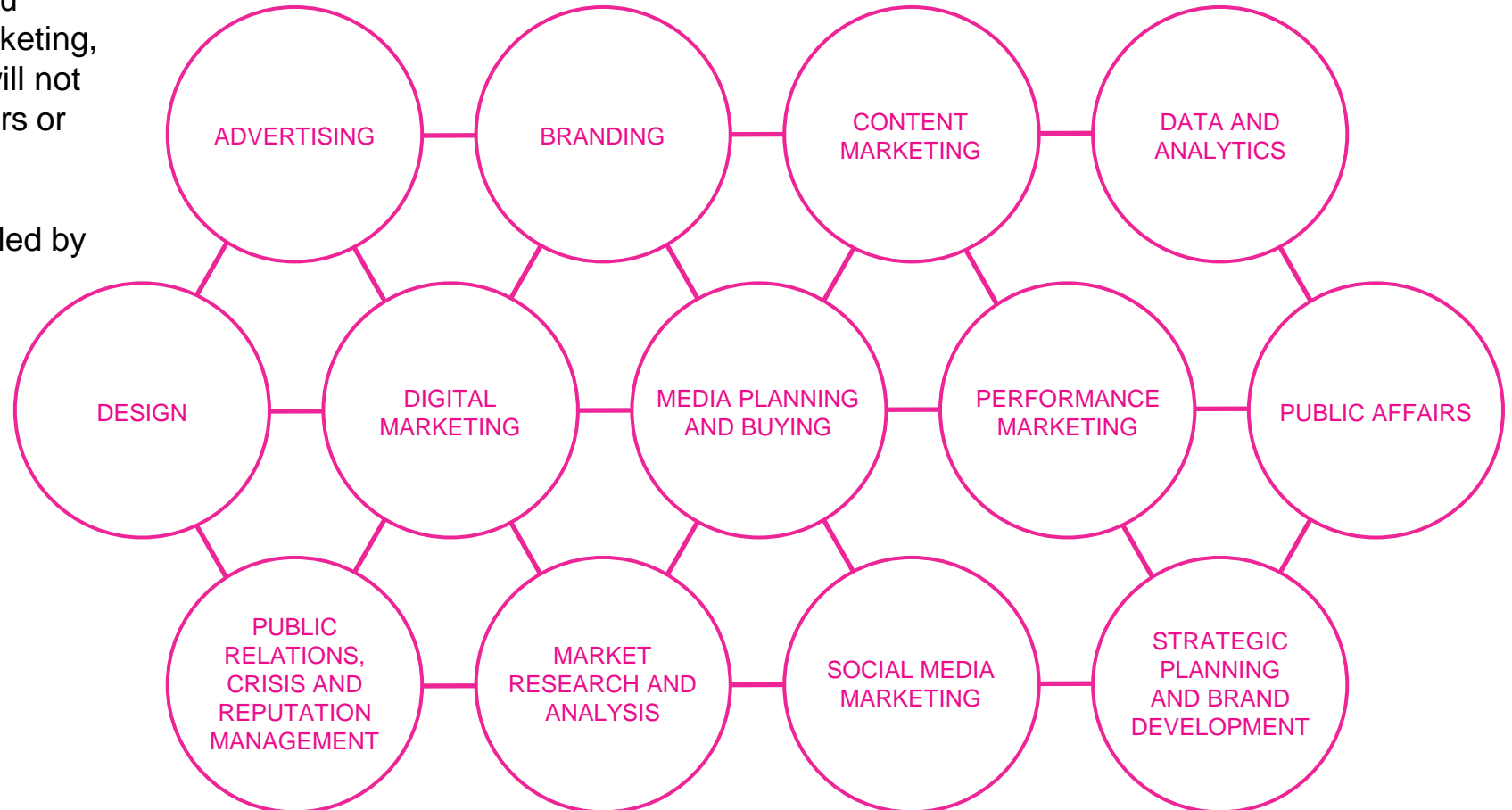
AMERICAN  
ADVERTISING  
AWARDS



# Disciplines

When you partner with Mower, you partner with a fully integrated marketing, advertising and PR agency. We will not need to engage any subcontractors or consultants for this engagement.

Visit Buffalo Niagara work will be led by professionals in our Buffalo office enhanced by a dream team of colleagues hand-picked from other parts of the Mower organization throughout New York State and beyond.





# ▣▣ The Challenge You Gave Us

## Objective

Market Buffalo Niagara as a premier destination for leisure travelers, meeting planners, group tour planners and sports rights holders, **building interest in Buffalo for years to come.**

## Business Objectives/ Impact:

**Elevate Interest and Increase Revenue** for Buffalo Niagara's visitor economy.

Build awareness and interest that results in **increasing the number of visitors, overnight stays and spending.**

- increase average # of nights from 2.9\*
- increase average daily per person expenditure from \$187\*

## Strategic Approach:

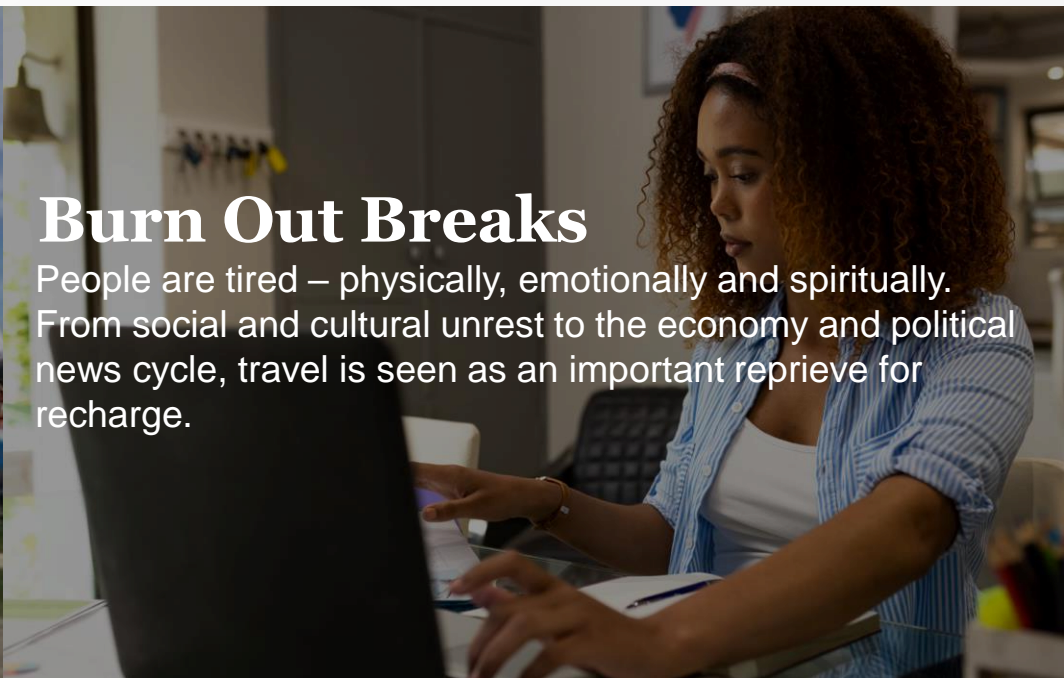
Create a holistic brand strategy and positioning, creative platform, digital marketing / media strategy and PR program that showcases Buffalo Niagara as a premier destination for **cultural tourism, heritage tourism and outdoor recreation.**

## ▀▀ The Opportunity We See

Buffalo is on the cusp of a powerful opportunity. Travelers are seeking the Cultural, Heritage and Outdoor activities that Buffalo Niagara delivers.

**53%** of consumers plan to **increase spending on experiences** rather than physical goods over the next year. – *McKinsey & Company, 2023*

---



## ▣▣ How We'll Do It

**Mower's task is to boldly deliver on Visit Buffalo Niagara's Vision Statement:**

“To be the most surprising destination you will ever visit.”

**By focusing on the rich and varied experiences Buffalo delivers today:**

- Lakes and water activities
- Home to the world-class AKG Art Museum
- Timeless architecture
- Robust culinary and craft beverage scene
- Erie Canal Bicentennial
- Ralph Wilson Park
- Statler Hotel Reopening
- America 250
- Buffalo Bills NFL Draft

# Yet There is a Mindset Barrier to Overcome

Mower's Insight team conducted a quantitative survey with leisure travelers within Buffalo's key geographic markets to glean current perceptions.

Findings highlight a **gap between Buffalo's revitalized personality and current-state perceptions.**

While residents know and celebrate the revitalized Buffalo, we **must educate and change the mindset** with travelers within the region's 4-hour radius.

Buffalo's legacy association with industrial decline creates perceptions of the city being less vibrant and more run-down. For some, perceptions of crime causes pause.

*"It seemed very run down compared to when I was younger. Blocks and blocks of decaying buildings."*

*"The region is known for steel and auto manufacturing."*

*"There is a lot of economic distress."*

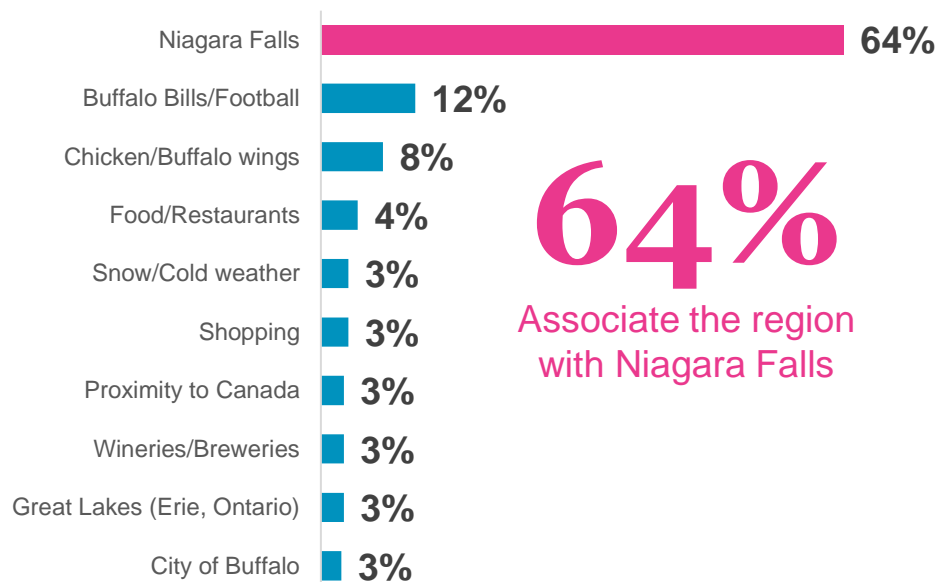
[Click here to see the full research results](#)

# ▀▀ We Must Broaden Awareness of Buffalo's Revitalization

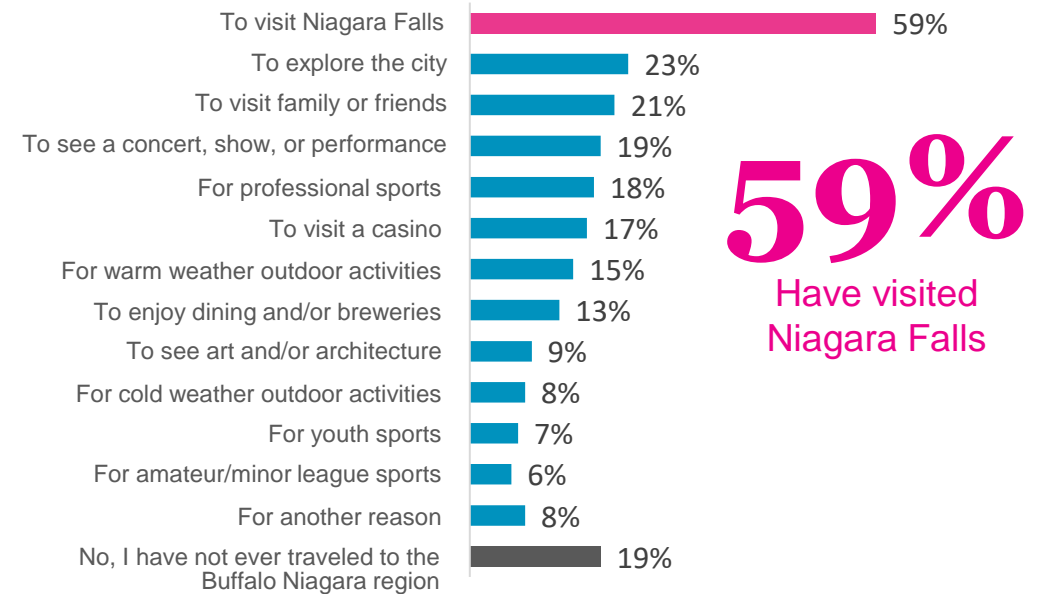
**Niagara Falls** stands out as the top attraction that captures visitors' attention.

We will celebrate Niagara Falls and showcase the rich, dynamic experiences that Buffalo provides.

## Top Mentions



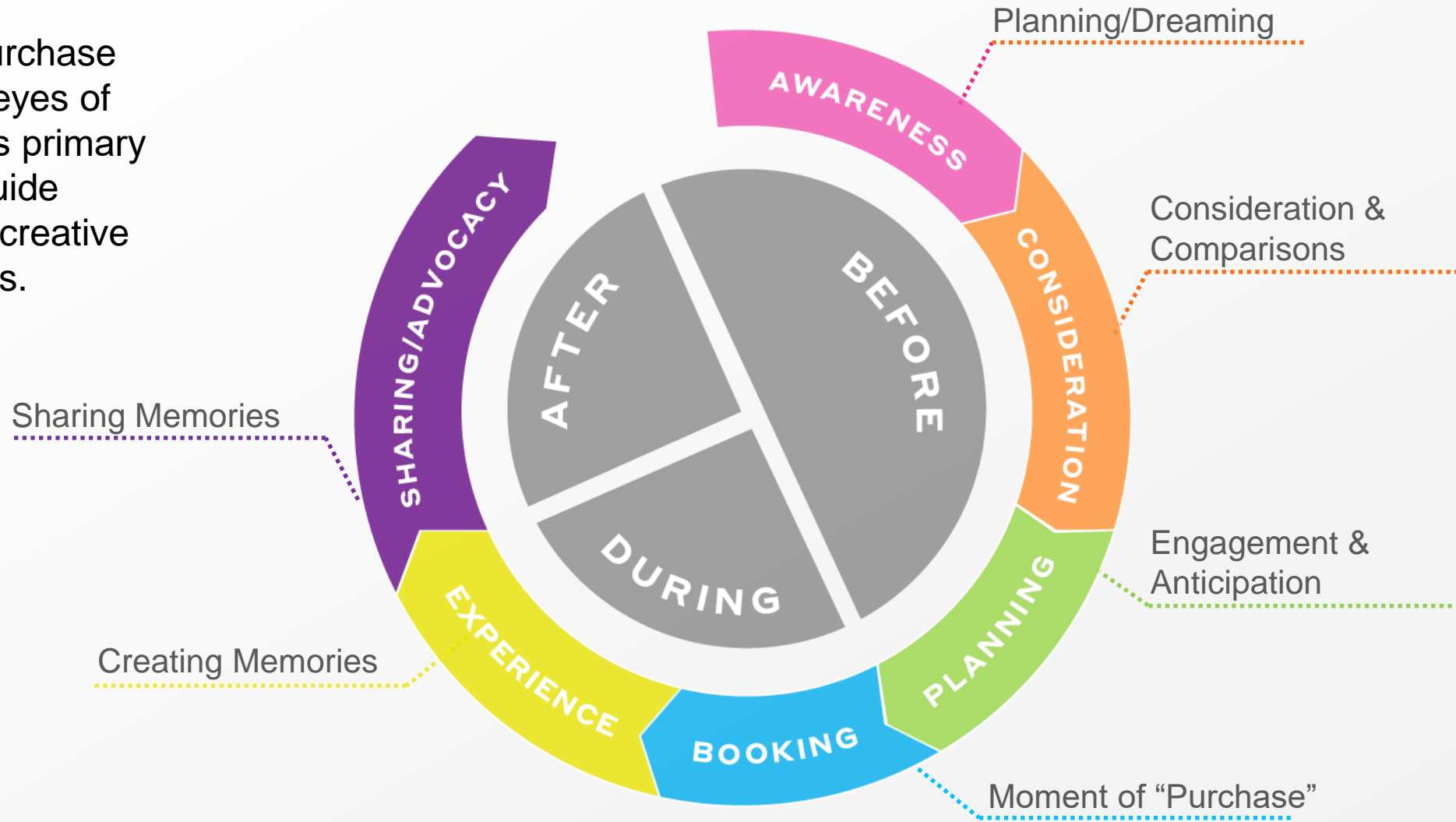
Q3. Thinking specifically about the Buffalo Niagara region of New York, what would you say the area is known for? [OPEN END; CODED]



Q4. Have you ever traveled to the Buffalo Niagara region of New York? Please select all that apply.

# Building Buffalo Brand Advocates

We will look at the Purchase Journey through the eyes of Visit Buffalo Niagara's primary target segments to guide strategic positioning, creative messaging and tactics.



## Core Target Segments

Partnering with Mower's Travel & Tourism practice gives Visit Buffalo Niagara the benefit of a team that comes with a deep understanding of your key targets. Link to fully [detailed personas](#).



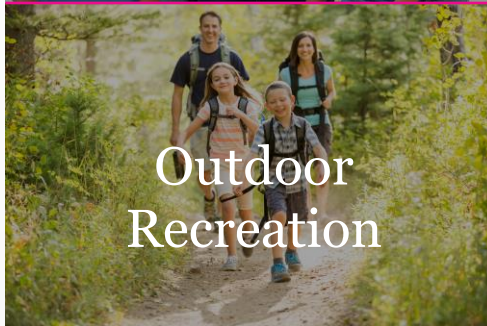
### Cultural Tourism

*"Buffalo Niagara has it all for us—a rich tapestry of cultural experiences from world-class art galleries to historic architecture. We love exploring the AKG Art Museum and taking leisurely strolls through the historic streets, marveling at the beautiful buildings. Plus, the vibrant theater scene and unique local festivals make every visit feel like a new adventure. It's the perfect blend of history, art and community that keeps us coming back."*



### Heritage Tourism

*"Buffalo Niagara is our go-to destination for family trips because it offers such a fascinating dive into history. Our kids love visiting the Buffalo Erie County Naval & Military Park and exploring the interactive exhibits at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site. We all enjoy stepping back in time at Old Fort Niagara and learning about the region's pivotal role in American history. It's the perfect place for our family to bond over shared discoveries and create lasting memories while appreciating our heritage."*



### Outdoor Recreation

*"Buffalo Niagara is the ideal spot for our family's outdoor adventures. We love hiking through the stunning trails of Chestnut Ridge Park and kayaking along the scenic Buffalo River. The kids have a blast at Canalside, where we can bike, play games and enjoy the waterfront views. And with Niagara Falls just a short drive away, we always have exciting new outdoor activities to explore together. It's the perfect mix of nature and fun that keeps us coming back year after year."*

# Target Insight to Inform Brand Positioning

## Mower In-House Research

Mower has integrated research into our approach for over 40 years. We understand how to use research to inform actionable learnings and strategy. At Mower, we believe a strong strategy is the foundation of great work, and we inform those strategies by utilizing research to learn about audiences, markets, industries, competitors, and differentiators to help our clients stand apart.



### Brand Workshop

A collaborative workshop designed and facilitated by Mower's experienced staff with key members of the VBN team and stakeholders. The agenda is designed to uncover the authentic and differentiated elements of your brand, as well as the strengths and assets of the Buffalo Niagara region. Inputs from this virtual session will inform the subsequent primary research as well as the brand position and messaging.



### Competitive/Benchmarking Audit & Social Listening

To identify best practices and areas of whitespace, Mower will conduct a marketing communications audit among 4 DMOs that are identified as competitive or aspirational to VBN. Mower reviews company website, marketing collateral, and social media platforms to identify themes, imagery, and messaging and will identify opportunities for VBN to differentiate and appeal to target audiences. Perspectives from online conversations among travelers will also be incorporated.



### Qualitative In-Depth Interviews with Partner Stakeholders

Mower will conduct one-on-one interviews with key VBN stakeholder partners in the meeting planning, group tour planning, and sports coordination categories to uncover perspectives, experiences, motivations, and barriers when choosing destinations. Topics of questioning may include: experience with VBN and other DMOs, perceptions of the region and its advantages and strengths, how to attract travelers, and DMO partnership needs.



### Quantitative Survey among Leisure Travelers

To understand awareness and perceptions of the Buffalo Niagara region, Mower will conduct a quantitative survey among 1,000 leisure travelers (both those who have visited and those who have not) to learn about motivations and preferences when choosing a destination. Travel preferences, interests, and decision process will be explored in an online survey, as well as evaluations of VBN offerings around cultural, heritage, and outdoor experiences.

*Mower will collaborate with the VBN team on development of all materials and a report deliverable will be developed for each stage of research described above.*



# Creative Methodology

## Rooted in strategy

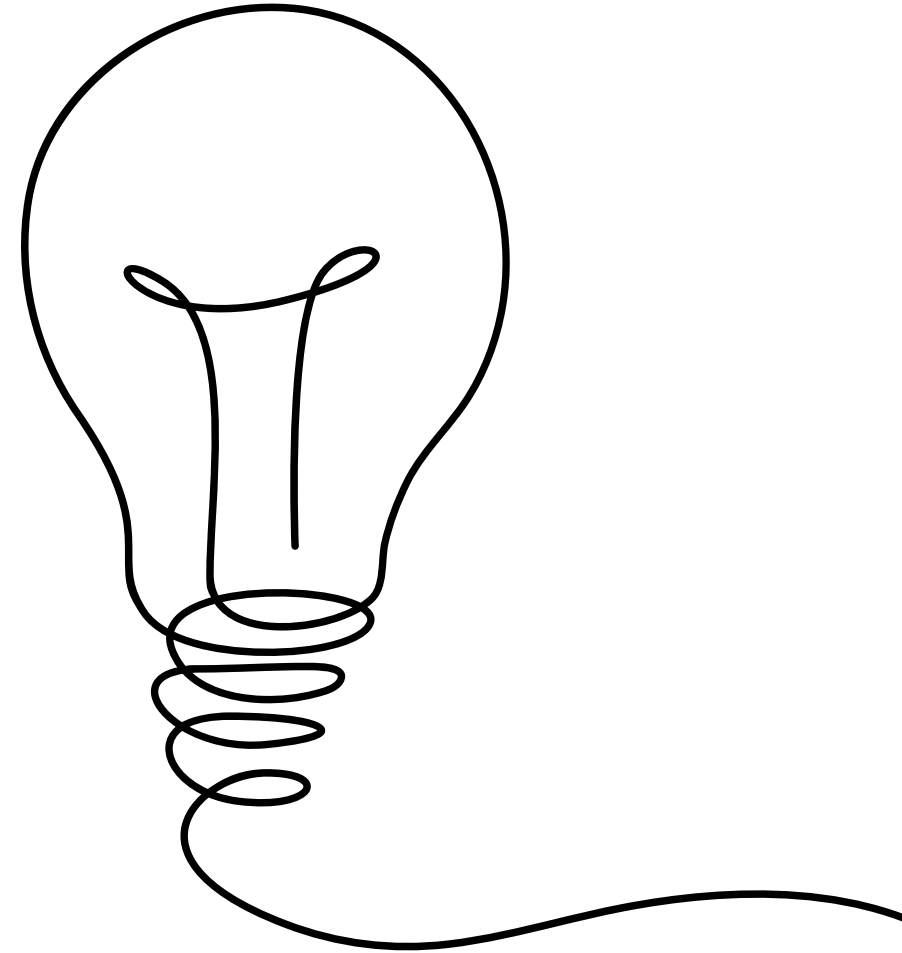
Once we're briefed on our strategic approach, everything that comes next—the messaging, visuals and extensions—must connect back to our strategic insights and goals. Our strategists keep us honest and inspired.

## Close collaboration with media

Sometimes the creative idea *is* the media. So, we work closely with our media team to influence action from both a buying and a creative perspective, making sure we have the right message, in the right place, at the right time.

## Authentic messaging creates Fierce Friends

The best ideas resonate on an emotional level—with authentic messaging and engaging visuals, we can inspire our audience to take action. We turn customers into friends by developing creative that's supported by strong RTBs, using our internal evaluation process to ensure these ideas will be as impactful in practice as they are on paper.



# Media Planning & Buying Process

Mower brings a holistic approach to media planning and buying. Our media planners are never working in a silo. Most client engagements begin with a strong strategic component—a discovery workshop, primary and/or secondary research, a Success Plan and, ultimately, the delivery of key customer insights. Our media team works collaboratively with creative partners – both internal and external – to develop both the creative platform and the optimal way to connect that platform to both business and consumer audiences.

## Analysis

1. Review VBN's current & aspirational position as a premier destination while identifying key growth goals.
2. Detailed evaluation of target segments (leisure, meeting planners, etc.) budget, insights and research.
3. Evaluate current creative platform, brand architecture & communication plans.
4. Define campaign objectives: awareness, hotel bookings, event & sport inquiries, site volume.

## Strategy

1. Establish key media success criteria.
2. Identify target channels, media mix & creative approach.
3. Define performance measurement methodology & investment strategy.
4. Integrate platform, channel considerations and review CRM systems & back-end data flows.

## Planning

1. Define media usage by target (day vs. overnight traveler, outdoor recreation vs. cultural traveler) and identify key touch points.
2. Coordinate and align creative messaging with tactics and targets.
3. Define targeting/ geography/timing/ seasonality approach for NY, Southern Ontario & beyond.
4. Determine tagging and metrics collection requirements

## Buying & Deployment

1. Issue RFPs, negotiate buys and value adds.
2. Configure campaign management system and purchase media.
3. Conduct testing and QA reviews.
4. Coordinate production and launch.

## Analytics & Optimization

1. Monitor campaign delivery.
2. Review and assess performance metrics and conversion trends.
3. Define strategy enhancements/shifts.
4. Reconfigure campaign.
5. Measure post-campaign results while integrating client provided tourism reports & data; leverage for ongoing or upcoming initiatives.

# PR: Earned Media to Elevate Interest in the Destination

**Research:** Skilled account planners work with PR team members to identify opportunities.

**Strategy:** Discovery session with the VBN team will guide comprehensive PR planning.

## **Media/Influencer Database Design:**

A custom list will be curated from our database of national, regional and local leisure, business, trade journalists, producers and influencers.

**Plan Development:** Based on identified goals and KPIs, Mower will develop a tactical plan that provides parallel tracks for each audience.

Tactics will span proactive media outreach, thought leadership, activations, media events, fam trips, individual visits, trade show engagement and marketing partnerships – all geared to elevating the region's story to generate interest and booked visits.

**Engagements with Social Creators:** Mower will work to ensure your social channels benefit from the halo effect of influencer content, earning lift in audience size and engagement at a favorable earned media value.

**Content Development:** We will craft and update an “evergreen” press kit, news releases, media backgrounders, speaking points, statements, award entries and website content and handle ad hoc copywriting—consistently delivered in Visit Buffalo Niagara's distinct brand voice.

**Reporting and Quarterly Business Reviews:** We will keep Visit Buffalo Niagara tightly connected to our work through regular team calls and updates, as well as monthly, quarterly and annual reports that include deep analysis of PR's impact and earned media performance, with recommended next steps informed by the data.

## Examples of How Mower Generates Results



Mower created a rallying cry and tourism partner toolkit for NYSTIA members to use to augment their pandemic recovery marketing. Goal: to encourage New Yorkers to vacation in their home state in 2021 to help restore tourism sales, jobs and tax revenue. It worked.

**Over 100 DMOs and every TPA signed up --a record for NYSTIA co-op program industry participation**



As part of an integrated marketing effort, Mower spearheaded what resulted in a multi-award-winning campaign that underscores the County's spirit of welcoming and inclusion of diverse traveling audiences.

**"Go Beyond" captured the attention of more than 220 million people, helping to fuel the county's tourism growth to \$2 billion**

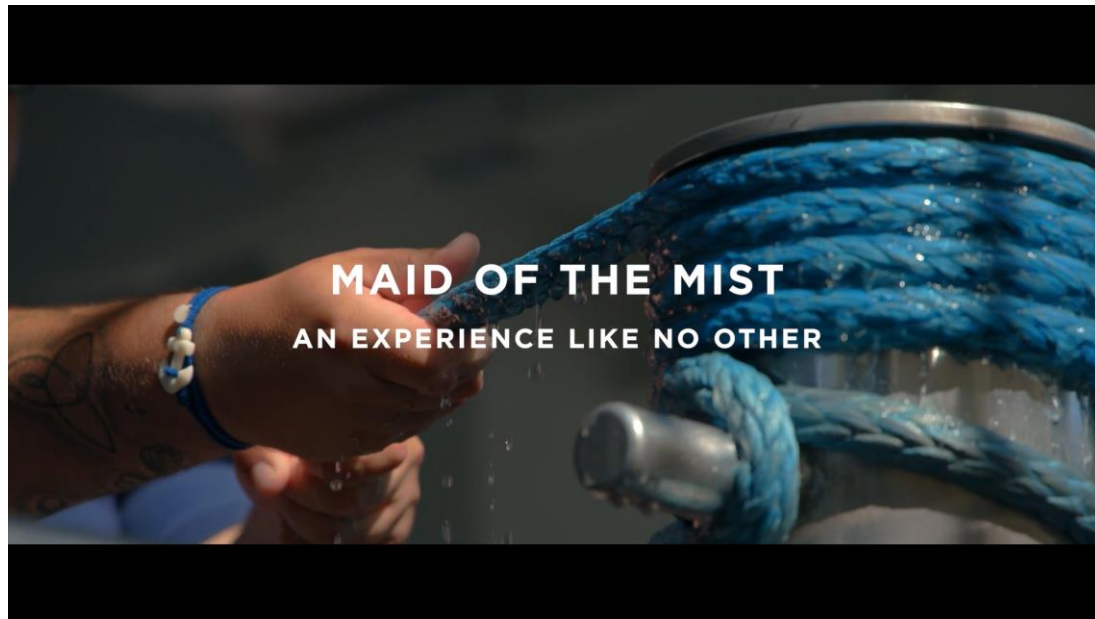


The primary driver of North American group travel to Ireland, CIE Tours was challenged to gain better brand awareness directly with consumers. Mower led a multi-year, multi-pronged campaign leveraging best PR practices to build credibility directly with customers, all without losing sight of important trade relationships that drive business.

**Mower's "strategically tactical" approach, starting during CIE's highest booking period, brought immediate positive results**

# ▣▣ Maid Of The Mist

Since 1846, the Maid of the Mist has taken guests for a ride along the Niagara River, stopping in front of the roaring Horseshoe Falls for a truly immersive experience. Our team captured the iconic boat ride, creating the first new promotional video in nearly ten years.



[Watch Video](#)

# ▣▣ Darwin Martin House

The Martin House needed a new theme for their annual summer party—one that highlighted the glorious gardens where the event takes place. An Evening in Bloom captured just that, with macro photography of the property's various flowers and a name that set the tone for the night.

Martin House  
143 Jewett Parkway  
Buffalo, NY 14214

AN EVENING IN BLOOM  
THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 2024 | 5:30-8:30 PM  
CHECK IN AT THE MARTIN HOUSE, 116 SUMMIT AVE  
VALET PARKING | GARDEN CHIC ATTIRE

Join friends for a magical evening in the elegant Martin House gardens. Enjoy beer, wine or a signature cocktail, seasonal appetizers by Oliver's along with live music throughout the night. This special event is an exciting opportunity for members of the Martin House community to come together to support—and celebrate—Frank Lloyd Wright's "domestic symphony."

Martin House  
EVENT CO-CHAIRS: Doreen Duce and Ellen Krout  
MUSIC: Mike and Debra M. Roberts  
GOLD SPONSOR: BB TASTRAVANA  
DESIGN AND PRINTING: Meyer Zepher Group  
PHOTOGRAPHY: Elin Fink

Kindly reply by June 1, 2024.  
SCAN THE QR CODE TO RSVP  
[martinhouse.org/2024/evening-in-bloom](https://martinhouse.org/2024/evening-in-bloom)

PREFER TO PAY BY CHECK? Please make payable to The Martin House.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
CORPORATE NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_  
STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL TICKETS (\$100 per person) \_\_\_\_\_  
NUMBER OF PATRON TICKETS (\$100 per person) \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Patrons have one month like your name(s) recognized)*

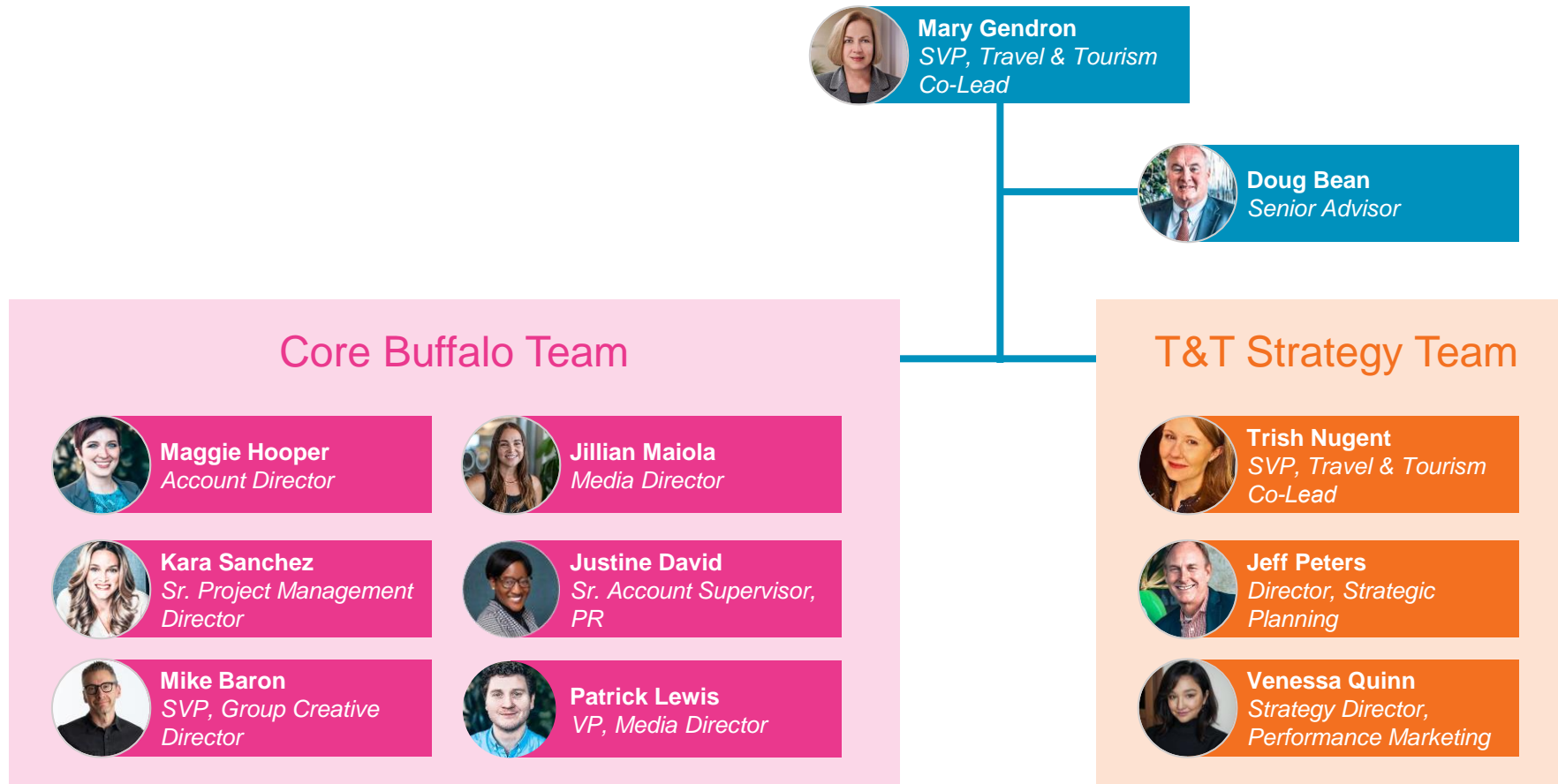
I CANNOT ATTEND BUT WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION OF: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE LIST YOUR GUESTS' NAMES. NO TICKETS WILL BE MAILED.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House  
143 Jewett Parkway  
Buffalo, NY 14214-2301

# Travel & Tourism—Meet Our Experts



[See full bios here](#)

## References and Related Experience

DMO experience with similar-sized budgets includes Westchester County Tourism & Film and past representation with destinations including Cabarrus County.

**Natasha Caputo**

*Director, Tourism & Film*

*Westchester County  
Tourism & Film*

[ncaputo@visitwestchesterny.com](mailto:ncaputo@visitwestchesterny.com)

O: 914.995.8502

C: 917.699.7651

**Bob Provost**

*President & CEO*

*New York State Tourism Industry  
Association*

[Bob@NYSTIA.org](mailto:Bob@NYSTIA.org)

518.956.1241

**Devin Cygnar**

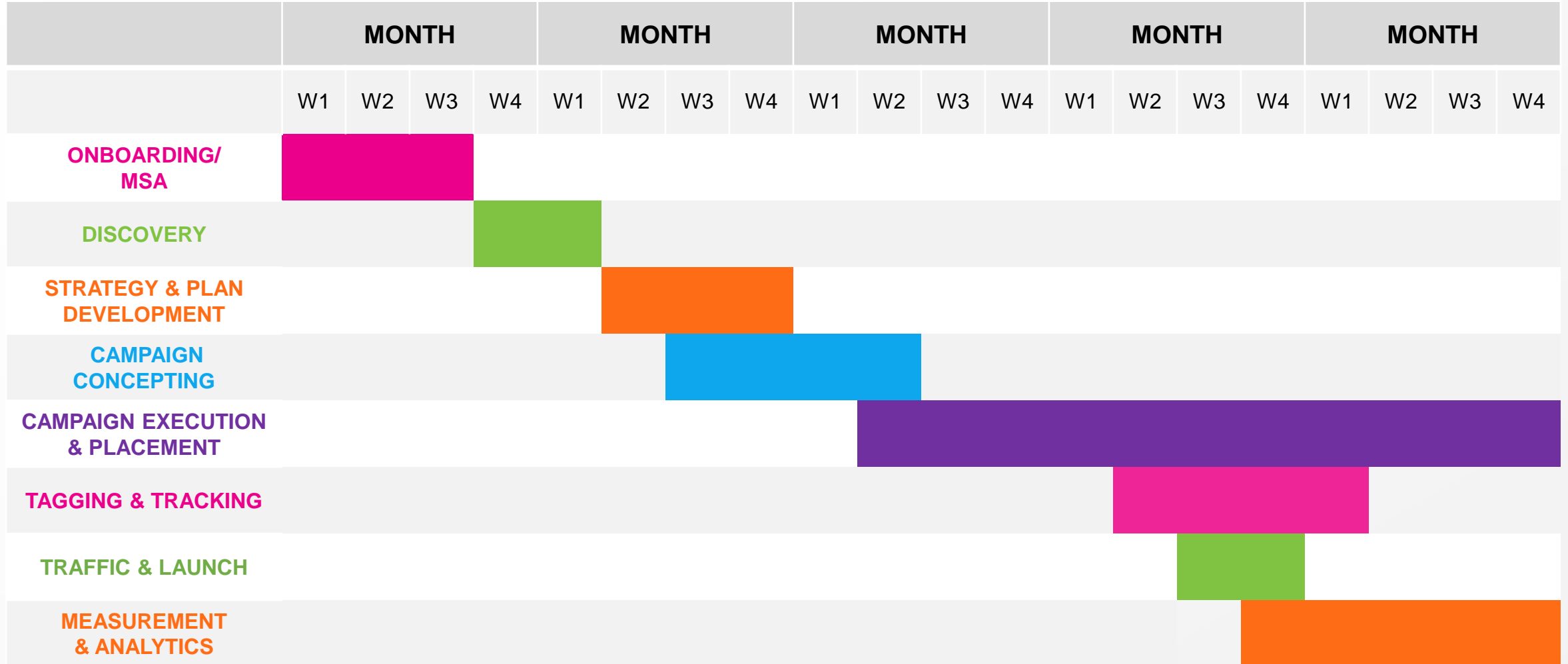
*Executive Vice President and Chief  
Marketing Officer*

*Northwest Bank*

[Devin.Cygnar@northwest.com](mailto:Devin.Cygnar@northwest.com)

630.788.9399

# Proposed Timeline





# Investment

Scope of Work	Agency Fees	Out-of-Pocket
Discovery	\$75,000	
Planning	\$75,000	
Campaign Concepting	\$75,000	
Creative Execution	\$250,000	\$500,000
Media Planning & Buying, Reporting	\$275,000	\$2,000,000
Public Relations	\$175,000	\$75,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$925,000</b>	<b>\$2,575,000</b>

**Billing:** Programs are addressed as projects. Projects are each scoped with a detailed Statement of Work to be approved by Visit Buffalo Niagara before work starts. Estimated out-of-pocket/third-party expenses are invoiced 100% in advance. Agency fee billing structure and cadence will depend on the defined Statement of Work. Ongoing projects may be billed monthly. Billing details can be discussed and finalized during Discovery.