

TOUR CAYUGA  
in the FINGER LAKES




# Visit Cayuga

**A WHITE PAPER FROM CAYUGA COUNTY OFFICE OF  
TOURISM**

A Nine Step Guide to Integrating Diversity, Equity,  
and Inclusion in Tourism Marketing A White Paper  
from Cayuga County Office of Tourism

[www.TourCayuga.com](http://www.TourCayuga.com)



# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- 1. Executive Summary**
- 2. The Team**
- 3. What is DEI in Tourism Marketing and Why Is It Important?**
- 4. The Situation in Cayuga County**
- 5. Aim and Objectives**
- 6. The Nine Steps to Implementation**
- 18. Conclusion and Key Takeaways**
- 19. Resources**

# Executive Summary

For nearly five years, the Cayuga County Office of Tourism (Tour Cayuga), a small destination marketing organization in upstate New York, has been hard at work ensuring that its business practices are as diverse, equitable, and inclusive as possible. These efforts have pervaded all aspects of its work — from hiring and training processes, to partner selections and marketing campaign strategies. This white paper outlines their journey, highlighting key steps, challenges, and outcomes. Their approach serves as a model for other tourism offices seeking to implement DEI initiatives, particularly those with limited resources.

## Goals of This White Paper:

1. Demonstrate how vital it is to conduct thorough research on diverse traveler needs and preferences as well as examining local perspectives
2. Explore challenges and best practices for securing full organizational commitment to DEI initiatives
3. Underscore the importance of forming partnerships with relevant organizations and community stakeholders
4. Provide strategies for ensuring marketing messages align with on-the-ground experiences
5. Outline methods for continuously evaluating and adjusting DEI efforts
6. Prepare organizations for the long-term commitment and gradual progress inherent in DEI work
7. Emphasize the importance of starting with local community engagement before expanding to visitor-facing initiatives
8. Develop strategies to handle potential backlash through education and stakeholder support



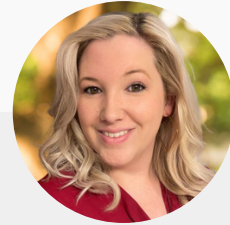
---

**THIS WHITE PAPER SHOULD BECOME A UTILITY, A TOOL IN THE FORM OF A DOCUMENT THAT WILL OFFER PRACTICAL INSIGHTS AND ACTIONABLE STEPS FOR TOURISM, COMMUNITY AND DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS LOOKING TO IMPLEMENT COMPREHENSIVE DEI INITIATIVES. THROUGH AN EXPLORATORY GUIDE WHICH UNCOVERS THE NINE-STEP PROCESS UNDERTAKEN BY TOUR CAYUGA, IT ADDRESSES THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES FACED BY SMALLER ORGANIZATIONS AND PROVIDES SOLUTIONS THAT CAN BE ADAPTED TO VARIOUS CONTEXTS WITHIN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY.**

# THE TEAM BEHIND THIS PROJECT



**Karen Kühl**  
karen@tourcayuga.com  
Executive Director



**Claire Dunlap**  
claire@tourcayuga.com  
Director of Marketing & Sales



**Harriet Tubman  
Committee**  
Community members



**The Culturist Group**  
danny@culturistgroup.com  
Marketing



**Travel Alliance  
Partnership**  
hello@tapintotravel.com  
Public Relations



**LaLew Public Relations**  
info@lalewpr.com  
Public Relations

## 3: What is DEI in Tourism Marketing and why is it important?

DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) as a business practice has become more important than ever. As social demands of society transform due to changing demographics, injustices, and inequalities along with the evolving preferences of consumers who have a thirst for inclusivity and equitable access to travel, destination marketing organizations must adapt and meet this need.



For Tour Cayuga, sustainability is at the heart of its DEI efforts. Karen Kühl, whose background is rooted in the destination stewardship of her native country, Nicaragua, understands the importance of a holistic approach to DEI. One that is rooted in sustainability as defined by the organization as support of the environment, its people (social equity), and prosperity (economic vitality).

### Sustainability has three primary pillars:

**Plant - Environmental Protection** - This is where most people's thoughts immediately go when asked about sustainability. And with the severe weather patterns caused by climate change, this is a critical place we all need to be responsible for.

**People - Social Equity** - This pillar is equally important. Here, it's vital to ensure that residents, staff, stakeholders, and organizational leadership are all considered. Their well-being, representation, and opportunities are essential to the sustainability of the destination. This is where DEI work falls, as an essential component of all sustainability efforts.

**Prosperity - Economic Viability** - In order for sustainability efforts to have continuity, they need to be economically viable—otherwise, the initiative will not survive, and a non-sustainable option might take its place. Additionally, an organization's sustainability efforts must be stable. The principles of sustainability must be in the core DNA of an organization in order for them to survive leadership change.

## 4: The Situation in Cayuga County

Harriet Tubman, a beacon of the civil rights and abolitionist movement, a titan of the Underground Railroad who helped enslaved Black Americans gain their freedom by leading them, by foot from the South to freedom in Upstate New York, made an indelible mark on the community of Auburn, Cayuga County, and its culture. A stop along the Underground Railroad became more than that when Tubman decided to make Auburn her chosen home.

Nearly two hundred years later, Karen Kuhl was appointed executive director of the Cayuga County Office of Tourism, serving as the DMO head for the majority White county (91.6%). Shortly into her tenure, Kuhl and her team were shocked to learn that Tubman, who is a domestic and international symbol of strength and empowerment, was not prominently featured in the destination's tourism marketing. They also learned that some local residents weren't even aware of Tubman's contributions to the region.



The scene was now set for Tour Cayuga to embark on a mission to center the conversation around one of the world's most recognized freedom seekers. But before the work could be done, the team recognized that in order to ethically and effectively promote the county as Harriet Tubman's chosen hometown, they had to look introspectively at their organization. Tour Cayuga had to decide what that meant and how they could ensure that they were honoring her legacy respectfully.

This endeavor was not without its setbacks. Some in the community were challenging making Tubman a central figure in the county's tourism narrative. There was also an opportunity to promote and uplift BIPOC business in Cayuga County, while staking claim to Tubman's entrepreneurial roots in the county. The approach had to be intentional, precise and purposeful.

---

**As Melody Smith Johnson, a Cayuga County resident, business owner and Tourism board member put it: "We had to ensure we would honor her legacy not monetize her name."**

## 5: Aim and Objective

The goal of creating this DEI framework was to create an economic vitality model that benefits and empowers Cayuga County through advocacy and education.

Additionally, Tour Cayuga sought to develop a sustainable tourism development model to differentiate Cayuga County in a competitive tourism market, while providing an environment where all visitors can fully immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of Cayuga County's culture, history, and natural beauty.

**The goal was to ensure that everyone felt welcome not just through words, but through action.**

This internal and external work would lead to a destination where all voices and perspectives are heard and valued.



Fact: 86% of underserved travelers prioritize finding destinations where they feel safe (Expedia Group, 2024 Journeys For All)

## 6: Nine Steps to Implementation

### 6.1 Introspection and Commitment

It all started with a decision. The journey into creating an inclusive destination needs to be entered consciously and with full commitment. A firm groundwork needs to be laid in order to define realistic goals and objectives.

As a destination management organization, its business is about promoting tourism to ultimately increase the economic vitality of its community. As Tour Cayuga began to explore how to begin its DEI journey, one of the first individuals whose opinion and support was sought was Gwen Webber-McLeod, and a fiercely passionate thought leader in the Auburn, NY community. One of Gwen's earliest advice was, **"Stay in your lane. Tour Cayuga is not a social justice organization, but a tourism promotion agency."**



**The Challenge: How can an organization ensure that it fosters a culture of belonging and inclusivity while also ensuring that it stays in its lane?**

*The Outcome:* "Tour Cayuga already had great influence in the positioning and storytelling used to craft the identity of our destination; but we needed to ensure that a supportive coalition of community stakeholders with a pulse on the social justice issues in the community were engaged in order to ensure that our marketing efforts were aware and supportive of positive change," - Karen Kühl

Laying the foundation of this work required figuring out the path that they needed to take. For Tour Cayuga, inclusion and tourism marketing go hand in hand. They depend on one another and there is a natural overlap that exists. Still, it is important to be aware of limitations that DMOs may encounter and to know that this is not a linear process.



## 6: Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

### 6.2 Extensive Research

**The Challenge: How can destinations be realistic and fact-based about where their community stands in terms of welcoming diverse visitors? How can they make sure that they understand the needs and challenges of these visitors?**

As a research-based organization, Tour Cayuga knew that in order to successfully develop and implement DEI best practice, they had to be well-informed of the needs of its community, understand the landscape and demographic make-up of diverse travelers, and collect both qualitative and quantitative data.

---

**The Outcome:** Research, while important, only tells one part of the story. Quantitative studies like MMGY's "The Black Traveler: Insights, Opportunities & Priorities," and Mandala's American Traveler's Interest in Black Heritage and Culture, were helpful for a big picture look at the tourism landscape. These studies provided key insights into marginalized consumer segments and offered a glimpse into understanding cultural motivators and values. But in order to go deeper, the team conducted focus groups with Black travelers and tour operators.

# Nine Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

To help understand what was happening in its own backyard, the team researched Black-owned businesses in the county and began documenting the Black Auburn Experience, led by prominent Black leaders and community members in the county's largest city.

In 2022, Tour Cayuga contracted Melody Smith Johnson and Beonca Louis, two Black leaders in its community, to start this research. The 2020 census shows that the Cayuga County population is 91.6% white, 4.6% Black or African American, .7% Asian, and .5% American Indian. As such, they knew that this distribution would likely be reflected in business owners. Initial outreach to discover Black business owners in the county included social media and Google searches, phone calls, and local recommendations.

This research became the foundation for the Black Owned Businesses landing page which launched in 2024.

## Guide to Black-Owned Businesses

Before this phase, Tour Cayuga didn't have a good handle on the Black-owned businesses in the county. As they moved toward better DEI practices, one of its commitments was to ensure that the economic development of outreach to Black travelers benefited businesses that Harriet Tubman herself would be proud to support. These efforts necessitated that they knew exactly what and where these businesses were.

Discover Cayuga County's Black-Owned Businesses

Explore culture, connect with the past, celebrate the present, discover authentic experiences

Black residents have been making meaningful contributions in Cayuga County since the area's beginning. During your visit, connect with the past, celebrate the present, and look forward to authentic experiences. From museums and historic sites to cafes, eateries, breweries, and community events—it's hard not to find something to do. Visit Cayuga County and learn about the people who changed the course of history, or visit Black-owned businesses to eat, drink, and shop.

Our communities continue to live out the legacy of its historic residents Harriet Tubman, William & Frances Seward, and more. While Harriet Tubman's most well-known legacy as a conductor on the Underground Railroad and as a spy in the Civil War, she was also a highly successful entrepreneur and businesswoman in her day.

Today, Cayuga County's residents maintain and build upon Tubman's entrepreneurial spirit by running their own restaurants, selling art and action products, and offering a wide variety of other services. While you're here, stop over and explore the Black-owned shops in the area that are carrying on the legacy.

### Business Owner Highlight of the Month

**Levish Lounge** serves authentic Jamaican and African cuisine in a relaxing, charming, and contemporary setting. All the ingredients and spices are sourced. The food also has to fall off the bone. This is the way it should be! Says Co-Owner Marisa Mayers.

In addition to amazing food, Levish Lounge hosts outstanding entertainment by some of the best DJs and bands. Co-Owner Andrew Kinkaid says the lounge is the safe spot for people to dance, have fun and play games like dominoes, a Jamaican favorite and serve delicious food.

### Black Owned Businesses Directory

Search

- Levish Lounge**  
288 Geneva Street  
Auburn, NY 13021
- Arthur the Artist**  
Auburn, NY 13021
- Barbara's Jeans Hair and Body Products**  
Auburn, NY 13021
- Caitlan Baked Goods**  
Auburn, NY 13021

# Nine Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

## 6.3 Board Approval and Support

Armed with will, determination, and the research to support its proposal, the team next needed to secure board approval and ensure they had full support for the new direction.

**The Challenge: Board support is a fundamental step in this process. Board members are sure to have questions and concerns about taking this new direction. How can teams best assuage these concerns and gain full support?**

**The Outcome:** Prioritizing transparency and research-based insight, the team at Tour Cayuga presented key findings along with a proposed direction to the planning committee and full board. Once approval was secured, the 2020 Cayuga County Travel Guide featured Harriet Tubman prominently on its cover, and a new promotional direction was underway.



## Nine Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

### 6.4 Organizational Integration

While the work began externally, the organization began to look inward in order to be truly authentic and effective.

**The Challenge:** How can an organization be honest and fully transparent about their own gaps in representation and inclusion?

**The Outcome:** Tour Cayuga tasked its Human Resource Committee to ensure there was diverse representation on its board of directors. In an audit, they found that the make of Tour Cayuga's board of directors was not reflective of the community at large. This needed to be rectified in order to move forward. Next, the team reviewed the bylaws, its employee manual, and strategic direction. Tour Cayuga developed a DEI statement and integrated DEI principles into the BOD committee work plans. They also obtained Travel Unity Level One Certification and staff members sought individual training through industry partners like Travel Unity and PRSA.

#### Partnership with Travel Unity

Tour Cayuga partnered with Travel Unity as a third-party certification, verification, and supportive agency to ensure that its new DEI initiatives were based on recognized best practices. Tour Cayuga was the first to become Level One Certified by Travel Unity (CBTU), which requires that they have internal- and external-facing commitments to DEI as well as clearly demonstrated achievement of short-term DEI goals.

In addition, Claire Dunlap, Director of Sales and Marketing, obtained the Certified Diverse Travel Professional distinction in 2022. This extremely rigorous certification course designed for individuals in upper management roles in the travel and tourism industry included live learning sessions and pre-recorded learning modules, and also required the completion of a comprehensive organization-wide DEI strategic plan.

[The DEI strategic plan is a living document that is reviewed on an annual basis and updated every 3 years.](#)

## Nine Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

### 6.5 Establishment of Guidance Committee

The next step was to form a diverse, 13-member committee to ensure authentic messaging.



The Challenge: How can destinations adopt a DEI platform without becoming political or ostracizing community members?

*The Outcome:* To address this challenge, Tour Cayuga assembled a collection of community leaders. Billed as the Harriet Tubman Communications Committee, a committee was created to include representatives from various stakeholder groups, including Harriet Tubman's descendants. Through monthly meetings, this group would play a crucial role in acting as a filter for messaging Harriet Tubman in marketing and PR, as well as to serve as a community liaison for the team. The messaging required multiple facets and voices in the community to ensure that Tubman's legacy was honored.

The committee currently consists of 13 people representing different perspectives on Tubman's life and the equal rights movement in Cayuga County.

#### Committee members include:

- The Executive Director and Marketing Manager of Tour Cayuga
- The account leads from Travel Alliance Partnership and LaLew Public Relations.
- A member of Tour Cayuga's Board of Directors
- A direct relative of Harriet Tubman
- The Reverend from the Harriet Tubman Memorial AME Zion Church
- A representative from the Harriet Tubman Home
- A representative from the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park
- A representative of the Harriet Tubman Boosters
- A representative of the community working with Black Women Empowerment
- A representative of the Auburn's Historic and Cultural Sites Commission
- A member of the Harriet Tubman Center for Justice & Peace
- A representative of the Auburn Downtown Business Improvement District

## Nine Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

### 6.6 The Importance of Partnerships

As Tour Cayuga strives to better DEI practices, accurately represent Harriet Tubman's history and legacy in Cayuga County, and embrace diverse travelers, partnerships with like-minded organizations are essential.

*The Outcome:* Tour Cayuga first identified which organizations' missions aligned with their goals and objectives of this work. From there, they collaborated with organizations like Girl Trek, National Parks, and the Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State to further amplify their intention of growing sustainable tourism in their region.

**The Challenge:**  
As there are many tourism adjacent organizations involved in social justice, so how best can DMOs identify and align themselves with the right ones?

As part of Tour Cayuga's strategic plan, the organization regularly identifies affinity partnerships and opportunities including participating in Nomadness fest, the Black Travel Alliance, and Black Travel Expo.

### Collaboration with GirlTrek

GirlTrek is a walking group, but it's also so much more. Described as a "life-saving sisterhood," GirlTrek is a campaign to transform Black lives by organizing walking teams, healing trauma, fighting systemic racism, leading a Civil Rights-inspired health movement, etc. Through its mission to inspire Black women to walk every day for better health, GirlTrek has influenced and inspired millions to help them "shape a new culture of health." Today, it is one of the most effective public health interventions in the country.



## Nine Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

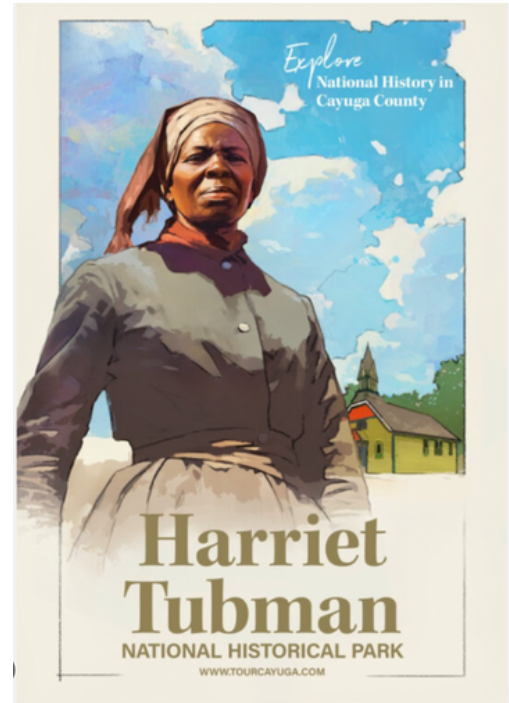
### 6.6 The Importance of Partnerships

#### Collaboration with National Parks Service

The symbiotic partnership between Tour Cayuga and the National Parks Service centers around the historic landmarks that operate within the county, including the newly opened Thompson Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Tour Cayuga works with the National Parks on creating dynamic programming, media amplification, content development, all with the central objective of advocating and expanding the education of Black and female identities in cultural history.

#### Collaboration with Underground Consortium of New York State

The Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State (URCNYS) is a coalition of organizations dedicated to preserving and celebrating the history of the Underground Railroad and its relevance today. Tour Cayuga spearheaded a partnership with URCNYS in their creation of the NYS Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Proposed Scenic Byway, a 500-mile byway which highlights sites of interest throughout the state and which plans to seek State and National Byway and All-American Road designations.



In 2024, Tour Cayuga release a series of five posters, highlighting historical figures from Cayuga County including this poster featuring Harriet Tubman developed in partnership with the National Parks Service.

# Nine Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

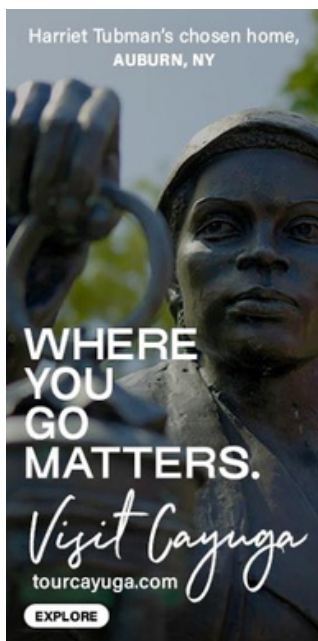
## 6.7 Aligning Invitation and Welcome

Here, Tour Cayuga ensured its marketing messages (invitation) matched visitor experiences (welcome).

One of the guiding principles of DEI initiatives is that “we cannot just talk the talk; we have to walk the walk as well.” This becomes especially relevant as we consider what we call the “invitation” and the “welcome.” The invitation is marketing messages, outreach efforts, media pitches, etc. It’s what is used to entice travelers, writers, and individuals to visit the destination. The welcome is what these people actually experience and receive once they’re there. **Especially when working with and targeting Black travelers and other marginalized groups, it’s crucial that these two narratives match.**

*The Challenge:* How can destinations make sure that the invitation matches its welcome?

*The Outcome:* In order to create the “invitation,” Tour Cayuga hired a marketing communications agency (The Culturist Group) with a strong DEI commitment. Additionally, Tour Cayuga conducted diverse and inclusive photo/video shoots, media FAMs intentionally targeting Black creators and media, and launched “Make it Count,” an advertising campaign targeting Black history-seekers.



To create the “invitation” Tour Cayuga partnered with The Culturist Group to create a multicultural digital marketing campaign that celebrated and respected Tubman’s legacy, including the diverse and underrepresented interests of the community. The campaign targeted BIPOC audiences who have an interest in culture, heritage, and the transformative aspect of travel. Understanding the importance of inclusion, the campaign was created in consultation with community voices, fostering transparency and exposing the strategic process to various civic, business, and nonprofits. The “Make It Count” campaign surpassed expectations, with a **745% increase** in website traffic, **44,000 conversions** and over **7.3M impressions**.



## Nine Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

### 6.7 Aligning Invitation and Welcome

#### Marketing Agency Matrix

When it came time to select a marketing agency, Tour Cayuga was very purposeful in making its selection. In order to select an agency that met the challenging demands of the project, the team created a Marketing Agency Decision Matrix. Using the decision matrix, key attributes were evaluated including: passion for the project, national/international reach, seeing the 'Big Picture', and the diversity of the team. (See Resources)

#### Community-Lead FAM Strategy

In partnership with Travel Alliance Partnership, Tour Cayuga revised its approach in hosting media FAMS honing in on quality over quantity. The DMO orchestrated themed FAM trips with Black writers and creators for key events like Juneteenth and International Underground Railroad Month. The objective: to build community and partnerships over one-off visits. In 2024, the destination's FAM strategy was recognized with a NYSTIA Tourism Excellence Award and was recognized by travel writer Martinique Lewis

Central to the community led FAM strategy is our community dinners where we educate the community how we position the destination and travel writers can hear directly from the community instead of the filtered message that a DMO puts together.

"My trip to Auburn proved that on a tourism level this can be done. Gone are the days when destinations give excuses, because there aren't room for them in today's industry. You don't need an all Black staff to share Black stories. You need passionate people who understand how important it is to tell the truth and be excited about it." - **Martinique Lewis, Writer and President of Black Travel Alliance**

## Nine Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

### 6.8 Regional Influence and Leadership

As outlined in its original objective, Tour Cayuga is committed to expanding this work regionally and across diverse spectrums of travelers.

The Challenge: What can DMOs do to expand this work beyond their jurisdictions and initial scope to provide an even greater impact for the industry?

The Outcome: Tour Cayuga regularly hosts workshops and summits for regional partners interested in creating their own DEI programs. Further work includes leading accessibility initiatives in the Finger Lakes region, including a partnership with the New York State Tourism Industry Association to start a co-op program with Wheel The World, an agency dedicated to accessible travel. Tour Cayuga is also in conversations with state-level organizations to develop tour guide training programs and tourism workforce development.

### Hosted:

#### **Travel Unity Youth Forum (2022-Ongoing)**

In conjunction with Travel Unity, Tour Cayuga hosts an annual summit designed to strengthen the travel industry workforce by empowering youth to pursue travel as a profession or leisurely activity and connecting members of the travel industry. Local high school students are invited to hear about career opportunities in the industry, engage with facilitators and participate in hands-on sessions.

# Nine Steps to Implementation (cont'd)

## 6.9 Continuous Impact Analysis

In this ongoing step, Tour Cayuga regularly evaluates and adjusts DEI efforts.

The Challenge:  
What should  
be captured in  
a DEI  
document and  
how is success  
quantified?

*The Outcome:* As with any DEI initiative, efforts are constantly changing, growing, and evolving and its impact is always being reevaluated. At Tour Cayuga, one of the most important aspects of initiatives like this is keeping a pulse on efforts and ensuring that they're moving the needle in the right direction while staying true to its authentic messaging and voice.

To this end, Tour Cayuga houses its DEI roadmap in a living document—it's constantly growing to reflect new and improved strategies. DEI initiatives are never finished, just as DEI best practices are never evergreen.

Moreover, to quantify success, Tour Cayuga implemented a measurement system called "impact multiplier." Success is captured by measuring growth of awareness, thought leadership wins, and influence on future guidance. (See Resources)

### Outcomes and Recognition:

- Received the 2023 NYSTIA Award for Excellence in Tourism Equity & Inclusion
- Developed a diverse content pool for marketing materials
- Increased awareness of Cayuga County as a diverse and inclusive destination
- Influenced larger New York State tourism efforts
- Positioned as a leader in accessibility initiatives for the Finger Lakes region
- eTSY Awards 2024 Finalist for Best Use of Sustainability and Social Responsibility
- Best Communications Strategy Finalist, City Nation Place Awards 2024

**"Having the framework from the original DEI Plan from the Certified Diversity Travel Professional training helps us year after year reevaluate and educate our organization's staff and keep up in line with our mission and value." - Claire**

**Dunlap**

# Conclusion

Tour Cayuga's journey in implementing DEI initiatives demonstrates the complexities and rewards of this important work. Their experience shows that while the process can be challenging and time-consuming, it is ultimately rewarding and impactful. By focusing on one initiative at a time, starting with the local community, and leveraging stakeholder support, even small DMOs can make significant strides in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. This approach is scalable and replicable if tourism officials are willing to put in the work.

## Key lessons from Tour Cayuga for DMOs:

- 1. Focus and Patience:** Don't try to do everything at once. Be intentional and patient with the process. Track lessons learned for future initiatives
- 2. Start Locally:** Begin the work by building community first. Learn the value of your destination from local marginalized communities before promoting to visitors
- 3. Prepare for a Long-Term Commitment:** Understand that the process takes years, not months. Be prepared for slow progress, but keep moving forward.
- 4. Leverage Stakeholder Support:** Gathering stakeholder support can be one of the most rewarding aspects. Rely on community partners and organizations for creation, fact-checking, and advocacy.
- 5. Address Challenges Head-On:** Use education and factual support to address backlash. Be prepared to slow down when encountering hesitation, but never stop the initiative.
- 6. Seek External Guidance:** Rely on organizations like Travel Unity, NYSTIA, Destinations International, state tourism agencies, and multicultural experts like The Culturist Group for different phases of work.
- 7. Measure Impact Not Revenue:** ROI for DEI activations are not always measured in revenue. Tour Cayuga coined the term "impact multiplier" to capture wins which considers the growth of awareness, thought leadership, and future guidance.

The success of Tour Cayuga's efforts, as evidenced by their regional influence and recognition, proves that DEI initiatives can not only improve a destination's appeal to diverse travelers but also positively impact the broader tourism industry. As the tourism sector continues to evolve, the lessons learned from Tour Cayuga's experience provide valuable insights for other DMOs embarking on their own DEI journeys.

**"We are constantly learning and redefining what it means to be equitable and inclusive." - Karen Kuhl**

# Resources

## Marketing Agency Matrix Example

Attribute	Agency A	Agency B	Agency C
Passion for Project			
National/International Reach			
Seeing the Big Picture			
Diversity			
Team-Based			
Budget			
References			
Working Compatibility With CCCVB			
Communication			
Efficiency & Efficacy			
Holistic Approach			
How Important the Project Is to the Agency			
Experience in Tourism Destination PR			
Depth of the Team			
Accountability & Measurement			
Knowledge of Cayuga County & Finger Lakes Vacation Region			
<b>Total Score</b>			

**Scoring Guide:**

1 = Poor  
 2 = Average  
 3 = Excellent

\*\*Replace "Agency A, B, C, D" with the actual names of the PR agencies you're considering.  
 \*\*Create attributes relevant to the organization's priorities.  
 \*\*For each attribute, rate each agency on a scale of 1-3 (1 = Poor, 2 = Average, 3 = Excellent).  
 \*\*After filling in all the scores, sum up the total for each agency at the bottom.

# Resources

## Marketing Agency Matrix Attributes Definitions

Passion for Project – This is a sentiment-based assessment to gauge if the agency who will promote it has the same passion overall.

National/International Reach – What is the audience reach for the agency? For Tour Cayuga, we needed to reach this wasn't a regional effort. Their goal is national and international coverage for positioning Auburn and Cayuga county as a travel destination and a catalyst for equal rights discussions.

Seeing the Big Picture – The end goal of public relations effort is to put a business or an organization on the right path to success. The PR agency needs to understand that this is not just a one-off campaign.

Diversity – How diverse is the team? The agency should be made up of a diverse team that reflects the population of the inclusive communities that are being targeted.

Team-Based – For Your Cayuga, the agency must be willing to be a part of their team and think of how to integrate partners.

Budget – Is it within budget?

References – What accounts have they worked on? How were these working relationships?

Working Compatibility With CVVB – Gut feeling of the working compatibility with the team; this effort is not a typical PR campaign to launch a brand or event. It will require a PR agency ready to build this relationship.

Communication – Do they have a clear process for updating our team on the progress and timeline?

Efficiency & Efficacy – Are they results-driven? Do they demonstrate the ability to constantly test, change, and innovate?

Holistic Approach – Does the agency offer any strategic guidance to building this new direction for CCCVB? Do they appreciate the longevity of what is trying to be accomplished?

How Important the Project Is to the Agency – Will the agency prioritize the project adequately?

Experience in Tourism Destination PR – Tourism destination PR has unique complexities.

Depth of the Team – How many reps assigned to the account; level of seniority of the reps.

Accountability & Measurement – Are they focused on measurement, but won't bombard with meaningless metrics?

Knowledge of Cayuga County & Finger Lakes Vacation Region – The knowledge of the area is important, but it could be an advantage to come in fresh. Knowledge of tourism products and the history or willingness to educate themselves.

# Resources

## Impact Multiplier Formula

**What is the Impact Multiplier Formula (IMP)? The IMP is a metric developed by Tour Cayuga to measure organizational growth of its DEI efforts. Rather than focusing on the quantity**

This is captured by using the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Growth of Awareness} \\ + \\ \text{Leadership Wins} \\ + \\ \text{Influence on Future Guidance} \\ = \\ \text{Impact} \end{array}$$

- *Growth of Awareness - The sum of paid and earned media impressions.*
- *Leadership Wins - The output of thought leadership development by members of the executive team.*
- *Influence on Future Guidance - These are wins in the form of shifting perceptions, programs, and attitudes across industry and regional partners.*

**A special thank you to Travel Alliance Partnership, Lalew Public Relations, and The Culturist Group whose guidance and expertise helped Tour Cayuga navigate this work.**