



Tourism Strategic Plan | Building Our Tourism Economy

Developed with assistance by:
Rebecca Maffei, Director

Officially Adopted on: January 3, 2019

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Executive Summary

Tioga County, New York, is located in the Southern Tier Economic Development Region and the Finger Lakes Vacation Region of upstate New York. The county is situated in a picturesque countryside, with small towns nestled in rolling hills, forests, and farmlands along the valley of the Susquehanna River. As a gateway to the Finger Lakes, Tioga County is proximate to some of upstate New York's most popular tourist destinations.

Tioga County attractions include Tioga Downs Casino Resort, Central Owego Historic District, and Two Rivers State Park. Boutique shopping, locally owned and independent restaurants, farm stores, festivals, art and history, museums, outdoor recreation, with hotels and quaint bed and breakfast inns close to the I-86 corridor bring visitors to the area.

The Strategic Planning Committee is comprised of business and community representatives. The Tioga County Tourism team recognized that, with market and demographic changes impacting tourism in the area and new opportunities for attracting visitors, a new strategic plan was needed to appropriately identify priorities for marketing, investment of resources, and focus in the coming years.

The Plan supports the Tioga County 2020 Strategic Plan through Goal 5 - Maintain and Strengthen Tioga County's position as a tourism destination; and Goal 1, Objective 7 - Bring tourism to its full potential in Tioga County.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision Statement

Tioga County Tourism is the resource hub for visitor attraction.

Mission Statement

Tioga County Tourism's mission is to grow the tourism industry in Tioga County by promoting its attractions, rural heritage, quality of life, and charm of the county to attract out-of-county visitors.

Values

- *Authentic*
- *Knowledgeable*
- *Connected*
- *Passionate*
- *Welcoming*

Acknowledgements

The Tioga County Tourism Strategic Plan for 2019 – 2021 is the result of a collaboration between Tioga County Tourism, TEAM Tioga, and the Strategic Planning Committee. Tioga County Tourism is grateful to the Strategic Planning Committee for the time, attention, and effort they dedicated to the development of the plan. Thank you to all of you who contributed, including but not limited to:

Strategic Planning Committee Members

Member	Organization
Elaine Jardine	Tioga County Economic Development & Planning
William Standinger	Tioga County Legislature
Bradley Crews	Historic Owego Marketplace
Chris Brewster	Waverly Free Library
Ian Barrett-Sargent	Tioga Media Consulting
Scott MacDonald	Tioga County Historical Society
Sonny DeWitt	LDC and Ti-Ahwaga Community Players
Stephanie Rogers	Tioga Downs Casino Resort
Christina Di Stefano	Tioga County Arts Council
LeeAnn Tinney	Tioga County Economic Development & Planning

Tioga County Tourism Staff

Staff	Position
Rebecca Maffei	Director, Tioga County Tourism
Loreen Maley	Assistant Director, Tioga County Tourism

The overall planning process was facilitated and this plan was framed by Vickie Kamataris, with the assistance and input of Tioga County Tourism (TCT) and the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) and other participating stake holders.

Primary facilitator:

Vickie Kamataris, Consultant

Facilitation assistance & plan drafting:

Rebecca Maffei, TCT Director

Elaine Jardine, Tioga County Economic Development & Planning

Coordination & plan editing:

Elaine Jardine, Tioga County Economic Development & Planning

Rebecca Maffei, TCT Director

Background

Tioga County Tourism is the sole organization in the county dedicated exclusively to county-wide tourism promotion and marketing. TCT is governed by a Local Development Corporation Board of Directors and is a function of Tioga County Economic Development & Planning. TCT works closely with local, state, and regional partners to attract visitors from outside the area and to be a resource for visitors to and traveling through the area. Working partners include the Tioga County Chamber of Commerce, the Tioga County Historical Society, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tioga County, and the Tioga County Arts Council. A new Tourism and Visitor's center opened in 2018 in downtown Owego.

Situational Analysis

As a key component of the planning process, the SPC conducted a situational analysis to help determine the goals and strategies of this plan. The analysis required the SPC to determine tourism assets, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and obstacles. The plan also examines existing tourism industry assets and identifies gaps within the tourism product.

TCT Partner Survey

In October of 2018, a survey was conducted to evaluate respondent perception of Tioga County as a tourism destination and the effectiveness of current TCT marketing efforts. The survey included questions regarding the engagement of partners, TCT strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and obstacles, regional marketing priorities, and strategic priorities. Survey results were used to guide and focus SPC analyses. Key findings of the survey included:

- An overall TCT effectiveness rating of 3.73 on a scale of 0 (Poor) to 10 (Excellent)
- An average rate of contact with TCT of 2.93, with most respondents reporting that they 'rarely have contact' with TCT
- Top five travel market segments for future growth:
 - Group tour/motor coach (3.79)
 - Tourists visiting local attractions (3.79)
 - Outdoor recreation enthusiasts (3.64)
 - Visiting local friends and relatives (3.57)
 - Transient travelers (part of a longer trip) (3.46)
- Top three recommended strategies:
 - Increase social media presence (3.71)
 - Coordinate electronic co-op advertising (3.54)
 - Increase internet presence through digital advertising (3.50)
- An overall perception of Tioga County as a tourism destination of 3.29
- Top 5 visitor activities:
 - Small boutique shopping (4.31)
 - A place to live (3.93)
 - Historic and heritage (3.79)
 - Casual dining (3.71)
 - An outdoors destination (3.57)

See Appendix for graphical analyses.

Asset Inventory

An Asset Inventory was provided by TCT in November of 2018 (*See Appendix*). The Asset Inventory identifies property, people, and partnerships that are critical to fulfilling TCT's Mission and Vision. The Assets are key to achieving and completing the Goals set forth in this Strategic Plan.

Situational Analysis - SWOO

The discussion and identification of SWOO - S (Strengths) W (Weaknesses) O (Opportunities) and O (Obstacles) - was used as a key method in developing this plan for Tioga County Tourism. Strengths and Weaknesses are mainly internal factors, while Opportunities and Obstacles are primarily external factors. Most goals and strategies evolved from SWOO analyses.

Strengths

- Arts, music and culture
- Tioga Downs Casino Resort
- Tioga County Visitor Center
- Return visitors
- Outdoor products
- Boutique shopping

Weaknesses

- Small staff
- Tioga County is unknown to outsiders
- Lack of coordination among entities
- Limited funds for marketing
- Lack of a strategic focus for marketing
- Self-focus of business partners
- Demographic diversity

Opportunities

- Digital advertising
- Tioga County Daily Event List
- Two Rivers State Park
- Nighttime events campaign
- I-86 easy on/off
- Proximity to universities

Obstacles

- Competition with other upstate NY attractions
- State funding limitations and restrictions
- Easy to drive by
- Funding restrictions on marketing
- Struggling businesses
- Flooding

Strategic Drivers

Strategic drivers were derived from the situational analysis and summarized in five pillars: Plan, Product, Promotion, Partnership, and People. Gap analyses were conducted and key focus areas were identified. For each, intermediate objectives and necessary conditions were described.

Key Focus Areas:

- Creative people resources
- Tioga County Tourism targeted content
- Improved digital marketing
- Product promotion

Intermediate Objectives Analysis

Creative People Resources

Intermediate Objectives:

- Staffing Analysis: what is needed (what then who)
 - Critical Success Factor: Task analysis
 - Research
 - Explore volunteer sources/options
 - Critical Success Factor: Project identification for intern recruitment/assignment
 - Critical Success Factor: Identify core competencies and desired characteristics by role

Necessary Conditions:

- Move to the Visitor Center
- Training resources

Tioga County Tourism Targeted Content

Intermediate Objectives:

- Gathering of information
 - Critical Success Factor: Develop content
 - Events
 - Listings
- Management of targeted content (database management)
- Dissemination of targeted content
 - Critical Success Factor: Methods

Necessary Conditions:

- Database complete
- People resources

Improved Digital Marketing

Intermediate Objectives:

- Tioga County *Daily Event List*
- Create a formal marketing plan
 - Critical Success Factor: Content
 - Critical Success Factor: Schedule
 - Critical Success Factor: Implement through media vendors
- Cooperative marketing

Necessary Conditions:

- Identification of needs
- Definition of gap
- Implementation of plan

Product Promotion

Intermediate Objectives:

- Partner engagement
 - Critical Success Factor: Identify vehicle(s) for effective engagement
- Product development
- Plan for partner engagement
 - Critical Success Factor: Strategic partnership promotion
 - Critical Success Factor: Product
- Develop a consistent communication strategy
 - Critical Success Factor: Craft message
 - Critical Success Factor: Select method
 - Critical Success Factor: Link to category in database to identify targeted 'who'

Necessary Conditions:

- People resources
- Updated database

Goals

Plan | Product | Promotion | Partnership | People

The goals and objectives of this plan are framed to coincide with the strategic pillars of the Tioga County Tourism: Plan, Products, Promotion, Partnership, and People, as noted below.

Strategies, Targets, & Measures

Each goal includes specific strategies, targets, and measures. Utilizing the measures and targets will result in significant progress and potential achievement of each identified strategy.

Goal One – Implement a Digital Marketing Plan

Short Term Strategies, Targets and Measures

Strategy 1.1 – Research Media Options

Measure – # of Media Options Identified. Target = 10

Target Date – December 31, 2018

Responsible – Rebecca Maffei

Strategy 1.2 – Update Database

Measure – % of Partner Listings Verified vs. Target. Target = 100%

Target Date – January 31, 2019

Responsible – TCT Staff

Strategy 1.3 – Update Website Listings

Measure 1 – % of Listings Entered in *Experience Tioga* Website. Target = 100%

Target Date – January 31, 2019

Responsible – Madi Tinney

Measure 2 – % of Listings Entered in Regional and State Tourism Websites. Target = 100%

Target Date – January 31, 2019

Responsible – Madi Tinney

Strategy 1.4 – Create Schedule of Promotions

Measure – % Match: 2018 Social Media and Cooperative Marketing Program. Target = 100%

Target Date – February 28, 2019

Responsible – TCT Staff

Strategy 1.5 – Select Marketing Media

Measure – % Match: Who (Vendor) + What (Media)/Promotions on Schedule. Establish baseline.

Target Date – February 28, 2019

Responsible – Rebecca Maffei

Strategy 1.6 – Evaluate Marketing Plan

Measure – % Increase in Digital Promotions: 2018/2019. Establish baseline.

Target Date – December 31, 2019

Responsible – Rebecca Maffei

Long Term Strategies & Initiatives

Strategy 1.7 – Evaluate Marketing Plan - Ongoing

Measure – % Increase in Digital Promotions Year Over Year. Target = Baseline + 10%.

Target Date – Annually

Responsible – Rebecca Maffei

Goal Two – Improve Product Development

Short Term Strategies, Targets and Measures

Strategy 2.1 – Create Tioga County Daily Event List

Measure 1 – Completion of Benchmarking of Regional Event Listings vs. Target Date.

Target Date – December 31, 2018

Responsible – TCT Staff

Measure 2 – Development of *TCT Daily Event List* vs Target Date

Target Date – May 31, 2020

Responsible – TCT Staff & Tioga Media Consulting

Measure 3 – Launch *TCT Daily Event List* vs. Target Date

Target Date – December 31, 2020

Responsible – TCT Staff & Tioga Media Consulting

Strategy 2.2 – Identify New Product Opportunities

Measure – % Increase in New Products in 2019/ 2018. Establish baseline.

Target Date – December 31, 2019

Responsible – TCT Staff

Strategy 2.3 – Enhance Existing Products

Measure – Google Rating (X/5 Stars) by Product. Establish baseline.

Target Date – December 31, 2019

Responsible – TCT Staff

Long Term Strategies & Initiatives

Strategy 2.4 – Identify New Product Opportunities - Ongoing

Measure – % Increase in New Products Year Over Year. Target = 10% Increase

Target Date – Annual

Responsible – TCT Staff

Strategy 2.5 – Enhance Existing Products - Ongoing

Measure – Google Rating (X/5 Stars) by Product Year Over Year. Target = 10% Increase

Target Date – Annual

Responsible – TCT Staff

Goal Three – Improve Product Promotions

Short Term Strategies, Targets and Measures

Strategy 3.1 – Identify Targeted Content

Measure – Timeliness of Submission. Target = \leq 60 days

Target Date – Schedule

Responsible – TCT Staff & Tioga Media Consulting

Strategy 3.2 – Disseminate Targeted Content

Measure – Timeliness of Submission. Target = \leq 60 days

Target Date – 2019 Marketing Plan Completion

Responsible – TCT Staff & Tioga Media Consulting

Long Term Strategies & Initiatives

Strategy 3.3 – Disseminate Targeted Content - Ongoing

Measure – Timeliness of Submission. Target = Marketing Plan + \leq 60 days

Target Date – Annual Marketing Plan Completion

Responsible – TCT Staff & Tioga Media Consulting

Goal Four – Optimize Partnerships

Short Term Strategies, Targets and Measures

Strategy 4.1 – Contact Every Partner

Measure – % of Partners Contacted. Establish baseline.

Target Date – December 31, 2019

Responsible – TCT Staff

Long Term Strategies & Initiatives

Strategy 4.2 – Contact Every Partner - Ongoing

Measure – % of Partners Contacted. Baseline + 10% Increase Year Over Year to 100%

Target Date – Annual

Responsible – TCT Staff

Goal Five – Utilize Creative People Resources

Short Term Strategies, Targets and Measures

Strategy 5.1 – Complete a Staffing Analysis

Measure – Completion vs. Target Completion Date

Target Date – Vendor Recommendation

Responsible – TCT Selected Vendor

Strategy 5.2 – Identify Intern Projects

Measure – Completion vs. Target Date

Target Date – January 31, 2019

Responsible – TCT Staff

Strategy 5.3 – Recruit Interns

Measure – Intern Hours Hired vs. Target. Target = # of Intern Hours Identified

Target Date – April 30, 2019

Responsible – TCT Staff

Strategy 5.4 – Effectively Utilize Interns

Measure – Product Impact on TCT Operations (Intern Project Scorecard TBD)

Target Date – December 31, 2019

Responsible – TCT Staff

Long Term Strategies & Initiatives**Strategy 5.5 – Effectively Utilize Interns - Ongoing**

Measure – Product Impact on TCT Operations (Intern Project Scorecard TBD)

Target Date – Annual

Responsible – TCT Staff

Monitoring Results

The goals and objectives of this plan will be monitored by TCT staff and the SPC to ensure completion of milestones and achievement of strategic objectives. Course corrections, as needed, will be added as an addendum and monitored accordingly.

Monitoring Plan

The Strategic Planning Committee and TCT working partners assume ownership and a leadership role in the implementation of this plan. However, the TCT and Tioga County Economic Development & Planning are ultimately responsible for implementation of the plan. The initiatives of this plan were determined under careful consideration during the strategic planning process and will serve as reference when gauging plan implementation performance. Tioga County Tourism will develop an annual work plan to ensure that plan objectives and milestones are achieved. To encourage progress toward the established objectives, targets, and milestones, this plan will be reviewed by the SPC quarterly for one year and thereafter as needed.

Once most of the objectives have been met or three years have passed, a new/updated plan should be developed.

Schedule

The SPC will meet at 11:00 AM on the first Monday of the months of April, 2019, July, 2019, October, 2019, and January, 2020.

Agenda

The agenda of the quarterly meeting will include:

- Review of the Work Plan and Scorecard
- Gap Analysis (comparing objectives and targets against current status)
- Identification of course corrections or corrective actions to be taken
- Development of an Action Plan as needed
- Submission of a quarterly report to the LDC

Using this plan as guidance, TCT is expected to continue to make measurable, meaningful progress toward the development and promotion of tourism in Tioga County in a strategic and planned way. It is extremely important that the plan be referenced consistently as any new tourism related project/initiative discussions occur and as all applicable decisions are made. While new ideas and recommendations should be considered in the future, this plan should be referenced to determine if implementation of new ideas and recommendations is feasible and in accordance with the strategic direction and objectives of this plan.

Conclusion

Tourism is an important aspect of economic development in Tioga County. The region's assets promise to make tourism a successful, if carefully planned, economic development effort. Implementation of this plan is expected to result in measurable, meaningful benefits to TCT strategic partners and to have a positive impact on the organizations, businesses, and citizens of Tioga County.

Appendix

Tioga County Tourism		
Strategic Planning Assett Inventory		
Property	Assett	Description
	Owego Welcome Center	New 2018
People	Rebecca Maffei	Director
	Loreen Maley	Assistant Director
	Volunteers	Weekend Coverage of VC
Partnerships	Tourism Partners	Any tourism business in Tioga County
	Chambers of Commerce	Tioga County, Greater Valley, Northern Tioga County
	Team Tioga	Tioga County Economic Development & Planning and the Industrial Development Agency
	Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Agency	Official New York state vacation region designated by New York State
	Finger Lakes Wine Country	Marketing organization for the Southern Finger Lakes
	Media Vendors	Companies TCT purchases advertising from
	Consultants	Companies TCT contracts with for services
	I Love New York	Tourism Division of Empire State Development
	Tioga Downs Casino Resort	Largest attraction in Tioga County
	Merchant Organizations	Historic Owego Marketplace and Waverly Business Association
	Municipalities	Town and Village Boards
	Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council	Group that develops long-term strategic plans for economic growth for the Southern Tier region.

Terms & Definitions

Contacted – One-way outreach by email, telephone, etc.

Daily Event List – Events calendar partners can add to and is accessible by 1-click

Development - Services Tioga County Tourism provides to partners

Engagement – Two-way, invested communication

Listings – all products

Partner – Business or entity with a tourism focus

Product - attractions, partners

Schedule of Promotions – list of products for the year

Strategic – Targeted and specific

Strategy – A specific objective to support the Plan goal

Targeted Content – Multi-purpose, effectively promoting Tioga County as a destination; 80% Tioga County specific, 20% referral to external attractions