

BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER

2026 Business Plan

Strategic Growth & Operational Excellence

Approved by the Buffalo Convention Center Board of Directors: _____

Purpose Statement

We inspire connection through unparalleled hospitality, collaborative partnerships, and exceptional experiences.

This purpose statement, developed through the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan process, guides all our initiatives and defines our unique mission and identity. The 2026 Business Plan translates this purpose into actionable goals, measurable objectives, and concrete strategies that will drive our success.

Buffalo Convention Center Impact on Buffalo

The Buffalo Convention Center serves as a vital economic engine for the region, generating significant impact through conventions, events, and visitor spending.

Number of Attendees	Number of Room Nights	Economic Impact
165,237	19,640	\$25,552,120

Strategic Framework

The 2026 Business Plan is based on our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan, which was created in November 2024 through extensive stakeholder engagement, including 20 interviews with Buffalo and Erie County community and industry leaders, and multiple board and management sessions conducted by MMGY NextFactor.

Four Strategic Goals

Our 2026 initiatives align with four strategic pillars that support our purpose statement:

- **Facility Investments:** Champion continued capital improvements and modernization.
- **Sales & Marketing:** Position the center as a premier destination while achieving financial sustainability.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Strengthen relationships across government, community, clients, and vendors.
- **Administration & Operations:** Streamline processes and build a highly skilled workforce.

Executive Summary

The Buffalo Convention Center 2026 Business Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for revenue growth, operational excellence, technology integration, and sustainability leadership. This plan positions the convention center for continued success as a premier event destination and economic driver for the Buffalo region, while advancing the initiatives identified in our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan.

2026 Business Priorities

- **Revenue Growth & Business Development:** Achieve a 10% increase in miscellaneous revenues and a 25% growth in booked events through strategic pricing, market expansion, and targeted event acquisition aligned with our Sales & Marketing strategic goal.
- **Financial Reporting Excellence:** Enhance the accuracy, consistency, and timeliness of financial reporting through standardized processes, real-time data integration, and faster monthly close cycles, supporting our Administration & Operations goal.
- **Technology Integration:** Fully adopt ConventionSuite Enterprise by June 2026, optimize workflows, and cut labor costs by 5% through better scheduling and digital tools.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** Lower environmental impact by implementing energy-efficient systems, waste reduction practices, and renewable energy partnerships while upholding operational excellence.

Goal #1: Revenue Growth & Business Development

This goal directly supports our strategic aim to achieve financial sustainability by diversifying revenue sources and optimizing space utilization, while establishing the Buffalo Convention Center as a top destination for events, conferences, and conventions.

Objective 1: Increase Miscellaneous Revenues by 10%

Achieve a 10% increase in miscellaneous revenues beyond budget by developing new revenue streams and optimizing current pricing strategies.

Key Strategies:

- Establish consistent reimbursement policies for in-house equipment rentals.
- Apply additional charges for reimbursable labor and contracted services not yet realized.
- Use analytical and historical data to develop a new pricing strategy for peak and off-peak months while remaining competitive.
- Offer customizable event packages with tiered pricing, including VIP amenities, upgraded decor, and premium audiovisual options.
- Consistently raise rental rates and adjust food and beverage prices in line with costs.

Objective 2: Increase Booked Events by 25%

Boost booked events by 25% compared to 2025 performance through strategic targeting, market expansion, and optimized seasonality.

Key Strategies:

- Identify dark days on the event calendar and focus on non-traditional events to fill gaps.
- Implement and promote a flexible pricing system for off-peak bookings to boost occupancy rates.
- Proactively research comparable convention centers to prepare for event losses incurred in Q1 & Q2 or possible future losses.
- Focus on mid-week, shoulder-season events to regain lost banquet and meeting opportunities.
- Develop bundled pricing models that combine rent, AV, F&B, and services.
- Launch a loyalty program for recurring event organizers
- Enhance collaboration with tourism and hospitality stakeholders, particularly through partnerships with Visit Buffalo.
- Grow social media advertising through consistent messaging.

Historical Revenue Performance

The table below displays the Buffalo Convention Center's earned revenue performance from 2019 to 2025, along with the 2026 budget targets.

Year	Events	Attendance	Rent	F&B	Electrical	Other	Total
2026 (Budget)	124	189,604	\$1,050,000	\$3,300,000	\$178,000	\$177,500	\$4,705,500
2025	103	165,237	\$842,839	\$2,979,315	\$166,165	\$40,435	\$4,028,754
2024	122	173,606	\$843,285	\$3,277,340	\$80,381	\$139,006	\$4,440,721
2023	103	199,594	\$740,794	\$2,849,291	\$146,229	\$120,673	\$3,856,986
2022	88	170,477	\$643,745	\$2,147,963	\$86,946	\$1,713	\$2,880,367
2019	132	249,940	\$804,301	\$2,803,287	\$187,118	\$4,232	\$3,798,938

Quarterly Revenue Analysis

Analysis of quarterly performance shows decreasing revenues in Q1 and Q2 of 2025, offering strategic opportunities for targeted recovery efforts in 2026 through our optimized seasonality strategies.

Key Findings:

- **Q1 2025:** Revenue decreased 15.1% compared to Q1 2024, mainly due to event losses and lower attendance.
- **Q2 2025:** Revenue dropped 18.5% from Q2 2024, highlighting ongoing challenges in spring season bookings.
- **Q3 2025:** Minimal decline of 1.5%, showing stabilization during the summer months.
- **Q4 2025:** Decline of 5.1%, reflecting market challenges but better performance than Q1/Q2.

Business Mix & Revenue Trends

Performance analysis by event type highlights priority areas for 2026 growth initiatives, especially focusing on banquets, conventions, and meetings.

Event Type	2025 Events	2025 Avg Sales	2024 Events	2024 Avg Sales
Banquets*	44	\$34,904	53	\$30,587
Consumer Shows	14	\$59,022	15	\$55,028
Conventions*	26	\$60,409	25	\$75,297
Meetings*	19	\$4,635	27	\$8,396

*Targeted event categories for improvement in 2026

Goal #2: Financial Reporting Excellence

This goal supports our Administration & Operations strategic pillar to build a transparent, accountable, and efficient administrative framework through automation and standardization.

Objective

Enhance the accuracy, consistency, and timeliness of financial reporting by standardizing processes, improving data integration, and speeding up the monthly close—allowing for informed, data-driven decisions.

Key Strategies

Real-Time Integration & Automation

- Continue deploying the centralized CRM system (ConventionSuite) to streamline event planning, scheduling, communication, and accounting.
- Automate cross-department event reconciliation in real-time to decrease manual spreadsheets.
- Implement event- and department-level P&L reporting for precise cost tracking
- Automate routine administrative tasks like invoicing, payroll, and scheduling to cut down on manual work.

Standardized Reporting Package

- Create a standardized financial reporting package (P&L, rolling forecasts, cash flow) for the management team.
- Establish a multi-year budgeting process to enhance financial forecasting and resource distribution.
- Foster improved decision-making and accountability through standardized reporting formats.

Accelerated Billing & Client Communication

- Reduce client billing turnaround time to within 7 days after the event ends.
- Improve cash flow management and boost client satisfaction with prompt invoicing.

Stakeholder Reporting

- Provide Visit Buffalo with monthly operational and sales updates within two weeks.
- Maintain transparency and alignment with tourism and hospitality partners.

Goal #3: Technology Integration & Operational Efficiency

This goal supports our strategic objectives to streamline processes, build a skilled workforce, and modernize the facility to meet evolving client expectations while maintaining a competitive advantage.

Objective 1: ConventionSuite Enterprise Implementation

Transition all key staff to ConventionSuite Enterprise by June 2026 to streamline operations and improve the client experience.

Key Initiatives:

- **CRM Optimization:** Improve client relationship management with integrated customer data and communication tools.
- **Client Portals:** Create a digital Event Resource Portal with templates, planning tools, and helpful information for event organizers.
- **Exhibitor Self-Service:** Set up self-service portals for exhibitors to manage electrical and equipment orders efficiently and profitably.
- **Workflow Streamlining:** Automate setup, teardown, and maintenance request workflows directly through the platform.
- **Technology Modernization:** Install cutting-edge audiovisual equipment to attract tech-savvy clients and implement advanced AV and hybrid event technologies.

Objective 2: Labor Cost Reduction

Lower labor expenses by 5% through better scheduling, standardization, and performance management.

Key Initiatives:

- Lower overtime expenses in engineering and maintenance by optimizing scheduling and workload management.
- Establish labor baselines for each department and event type to develop consistent staffing models.
- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to track operational efficiency, like event turnaround times and staff productivity metrics.
- Expand cross-training programs to enhance operational flexibility and minimize staffing bottlenecks.
- Incorporate labor KPIs into manager performance reviews to promote accountability.

Expected Outcomes

- Improved client experience with digital portals and self-service tools.
- Increased revenue from expanded service offerings made possible by technology.
- Optimized operations by decreasing manual tasks and boosting efficiency.
- Enhanced maintenance response times and customer satisfaction.
- Target annual labor cost savings of over \$125,000.

Goal #4: Sustainability & Facility Excellence

This goal combines our Facility Investments strategic pillar with environmental responsibility, supporting ongoing capital improvements while lowering our environmental footprint and updating the facility to meet changing expectations.

Objective

Lower the convention center's environmental impact by using energy-efficient systems, waste-reduction initiatives, and staff-led sustainability practices while upholding high service standards and operational reliability.

Key Strategies

Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy

- Participate in collaboration with Erie County in the launch of the Microgrid/solar project, including potential solar panels.
- Perform a sustainability audit to identify waste streams, energy usage, and areas for improvement.
- Remain informed about sustainability best practices to continually enhance environmental performance.

Paperless Operations

- Implement paperless workflows by using more messaging and electronic resumes on ConventionSuite.
- Significantly decrease paper waste by using digital documentation and communication.

Sustainable Products & Waste Reduction

- Aim for 100% recyclable products in beverage cups, paper goods, and other disposables.
- Remove single-use plastics and non-recyclable materials from operations.

Community Impact

- Maintain and increase donations of food surpluses to local shelters and food banks, reducing waste while supporting community needs.

Facility Improvements

Capital improvement projects aligned with 2025-2027 Strategic Plan:

- Evaluate exhibit-level flooring renovation.
- Renovation of lobby bar area and modernization of concession operation and POS equipment.
- Identify improvements to activate outdoor spaces for events.

Measurement & Reporting

- Create a sustainability dashboard with quarterly reports to monitor progress and spot opportunities.
- Create a one-page summary titled 'Sustainable Efforts at the Buffalo Convention Center' for stakeholder communication.

Expected Outcomes

- **Immediate Cost Awareness:** Improved understanding of resource use and ways to cut costs.
- **Strengthened RFP competitiveness:** Improved market stance by demonstrating environmental leadership.
- **Low-Capital Improvements:** Many initiatives need little funding but provide noticeable results.

Strategic Priority: Stakeholder Engagement

While our four main business goals guide operational performance, stakeholder engagement is a vital strategic pillar that supports all our initiatives. Building and maintaining strong relationships with government agencies, community groups, clients, and vendors is crucial to our success.

Government & Community Relations

2026 Initiatives:

- Create Buffalo Business Collaborative Initiative to integrate local businesses into the Center's ecosystem, including food supply sourcing, décor, and event services.
- Build relationships with local elected officials by highlighting the Center's economic and social contributions.
- In collaboration with Erie County and Visit Buffalo, host media events to highlight facility upgrades, sustainability initiatives, and community impact.

Industry & Cultural Partnerships

2026 Initiatives:

- Implement rotating art exhibits in Center's public spaces in collaboration with local artists and cultural organizations.
- Host Visit Buffalo's annual industry event to exhibit DMO and Center's collaborative efforts.
- Work with hotels, transportation providers, and restaurants to improve logistics and deliver high-quality visitor experiences.
- Participate in key industry associations to enhance visibility and networking opportunities.

Client Relations & Loyalty

2026 Initiatives:

- Develop a digital Event Resource Portal with templates, planning tools, and helpful information for event organizers.
- Collaborate with customers and regional influencers to enhance the Convention Center's brand through hosted events.
- Conduct annual satisfaction surveys with comprehensive reports to improve services and show responsiveness.

Vendor Partnerships

2026 Initiatives:

- Create a Vendor Performance Review Process to regularly evaluate supplier contributions and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Organize an annual Vendor Workshop to promote collaboration and enhance service standards across all supplier relationships.
- Update and expand the Preferred Vendor List to help clients find trusted suppliers while maintaining vendor quality.

2026 Key Performance Indicators

Success in 2026 will be assessed using the following key performance indicators, tracked monthly, and reported to the management team and stakeholders. These KPIs align with both our yearly business targets and our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan objectives.

Performance Indicator	2026 Target	Measurement Frequency
Total Revenue	\$4,705,500	Monthly
Booked Events Growth	+25%	Monthly
Miscellaneous Revenue Growth	+10%	Monthly
Labor Cost Reduction	-5%	Quarterly
Client Billing Turnaround	7 Days	Per Event
ConventionSuite Enterprise Rollout	June 2026	Milestone
Monthly Reporting to Visit Buffalo	14 Days	Monthly
Recyclable Product Use	100%	Quarterly
Event Turnaround Time	Monitor	Quarterly
Staff Productivity Metrics	Monitor	Quarterly

2026 Implementation Timeline

The following quarterly timeline outlines key milestones and initiatives for achieving the 2026 strategic goals, fully aligned with our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan.

Q1 2026 (January - March)

- **Launch Revenue Growth Initiatives:** Implement new pricing strategies, bundled packages, and Q1/Q2 recovery campaigns, including flexible pricing for off-peak bookings.
- **Begin ConventionSuite Training:** Initiate enterprise system training for essential staff members and department leaders.
- **Facility Assessment:** Conduct a thorough evaluation of facilities to identify and prioritize necessary capital improvements.
- **Professional Photography:** Hire professional interior and exterior photographers for high-quality marketing photos and videos.

Q2 2026 (April - June)

- **Complete Technology Rollout:** Achieve full transition to ConventionSuite Enterprise by June 2026.
- **Launch Client Portals:** Deploy self-service exhibitor portals, digital Event Resource Portal, and upgraded communication tools.
- **Loyalty Program Launch:** Implement a loyalty program for recurring event organizers.
- **Branded Catering Service:** Launch a branded catering service featuring premium add-ons, such as Buffalo-inspired menus and wine pairings.

Q3 2026 (July - September)

- **Optimize Labor Scheduling:** Adopt standardized staffing models and cut overtime expenses.
- **Sustainability Milestones:** Launch microgrid partnership, complete sustainability audit, and speed up transition to recyclable products.
- **Exhibit Level Flooring:** Full capital improvement project for the exhibit level flooring.
- **Art Exhibits:** Continue to offer opportunities for art exhibits in the Center's public areas.

Q4 2026 (October - December)

- **Annual Performance Review:** In-depth evaluation of progress toward all financial targets and strategic objectives.
- **Vendor Workshop:** Host an annual event to promote collaboration and enhance service standards.
- **Exclusive Marketing Support:** Provide clients with exclusive marketing assistance, such as targeted social media campaigns and promotional materials.
- **Strategic Planning 2027:** Create next year's business plan using 2026 insights and market conditions.

Conclusion

The Buffalo Convention Center 2026 Business Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for sustainable growth, operational excellence, and market leadership. Fully aligned with our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan, this document turns our purpose statement into actionable goals, measurable objectives, and clear strategies that will drive success.

Commitment to Excellence

Our dedication extends beyond financial goals to encompass the broader impact we have on our community, partners, and environment. By carefully executing our four strategic pillars, Facility Investments, Sales & Marketing, Stakeholder Engagement, and Administration & Operations, we aim to build connections through excellent hospitality, collaborative partnerships, and memorable experiences.

2026 at a Glance

- **Revenue Target:** \$4,705,500 (16.8% increase over 2025)
- **Projected Events:** 155 events (25% increase compared to 2025)
- **Technology Milestone:** Complete ConventionSuite Enterprise implementation by June
- **Labor Optimization:** Over \$125,000 in cost savings via improved scheduling
- **Sustainability Leadership:** Fully recyclable products and renewable energy collaborations

Moving Forward

Success depends on the combined effort of our entire team and on ongoing support from our community partners, stakeholders, and clients. Through monthly performance reviews, quarterly assessments, and continuous communication, we will maintain accountability and flexibility throughout 2026.

The Buffalo Convention Center is prepared to face the challenges and seize the opportunities of 2026, committed to excellence in every area of our operations and service, while progressing the strategic vision outlined in our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan.