



*Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.*

*2026 Proposed Operating Budget*

*Draft*

Approved by the Finance Committee on Monday February 9, 2026

## Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.

2026 Operating Budget

Budget Narrative

### Revenues:

- **Erie County Grant** – VBN in concert with the County budget office approved the grant for fiscal year 2026 for VBN in the amount of \$ 7,150,000 in addition VBN is budgeting \$ 200,000 in bed tax collections due from the 2025 budget year. The funds are to be used for the day-to-day operations of VBN as well as marketing activities related to the Erie County Sports Fishing Program.
- **Erie County Accessibility Grant** – In 2024 VBN received a \$ 20,000 grant from Erie County to market WNY’s restaurant accessibility. The project has been expanded to include an overall evaluation of accessibility in the region at various tourism-related venues. Additional funding for this project from Empire State Development will be used to expand the project’s scope of services overall.
- **Visitor Guide/Digital Advertising** – VBN will print a Visitor Guide for 2026. A new design and layout will be introduced. Sales for the guide began in August of 2025 and concluded in October with sales totaling nearly \$ 190,000. Consistent with 2025 advertising sales.
- **NYS Matching Fund Program** – NYS approved VBN’s application for a 2026 NYS Matching Funds grant in the amount of \$ 49,864.
- **Joint/Co-op Marketing**- Represents revenues generated from the sale of various Visit Buffalo Niagara collateral pieces and marketing related programming. For 2026 we will again provide social media assistance to the Convention Center for a small monthly fee.
- **Joint/Co-op Sales**- Represents shared costs to be billed to industry partners for attendance at various Convention Sales and Sports market related tradeshows, receptions, and sales calls with VBN personnel.
- **Grant Revenues** – For 2026, VBN will administer a NYS Agency grant to be used for the Freedom Footsteps programming which is expected to get underway in earnest during 2026. In addition, Visit Buffalo received an NYS ESD grant to help fund a regional accessibility program. For 2026 the amount is expected to be approximately \$ 25,000.

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**Expenses:**

- **Personnel Costs** – For 2026, VBN is budgeting for staff merit increases of approximately 3.5%. The remainder of the increase is attributed to the additional staff positions added during the second half of the year. New positions included an in-house graphic artist, a marketing specialist and staff to operate and manage the new Visitor Center at Canalside. These operations are expected to run six days a week year-round and during special events held at Canalside.
- **Professional Development** – Increases associated with increased staffing levels in the Convention & Sports Sales and Marketing Departments which require continual industry training and certification.
- **Advertising** – Decreases are planned which were to be expected as there were significant one-time costs associated with the onboarding of the new Advertising and PR agencies in 2025. This coupled with an anticipated reduction in hotel occupancy taxes in 2026 accounts for the reduction in 2026.
- **Convention Commitments** – For 2026, there are fewer convention groups requiring financial support overall. In 2025 Visit Buffalo hosted several groups that required financial commitments two of the larger were the African American Travel Conference and Small Market Meetings. There are no singularly large commitments anticipated for 2026.
- **Visitor Guide** – Overall cost of Guide is expected to be consistent with that of the previous year. Buffalo Spree was again selected to assist in the printing of the guide in 2026.
- **Tradeshows** – Overall costs associated with attendance at tradeshows will remain consistent with 2025. Overall number of shows will remain similar with over 40 shows expected to be attended for 2026. The mix of shows continues to be updated focusing on strengthening existing markets while also targeting new potential opportunities.

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- **Sales Bids & Promotions** – Includes travel and related expenses required to bid on convention and meeting related leads. It also includes the cost of site inspections as well as costs associated with the Bring it Home and Backyard Marketing Programs which were rolled out previously. Continuation of the Customer Advisory Council is also budgeted in this line along with a 3rd party meeting facilitator assisting us in the DC marketplace. The amounts budgeted are consistent with previous levels. In addition, a greater number of industry sponsorships are planned in hope of getting VBN's image out into the marketplace in a cost-effective way.
- **Destination Development** – The program will continue to provide emphasis on Visitor readiness training and community education and outreach. The Freedom Footsteps heritage program will get going in earnest, The Mobile Visitor Center will once again be rolled out during the year.
- **Canalside Visitor Center** – In 2025 VBN partnered with ESD to begin operating a Visitor Center at Canalside. The Center was expected to be opened by May 1, 2025, but did not actually begin operations until November due to delays in the construction of the building. 2026 will represent the first full year of operations at this location so we will continue to monitor activity to ensure proper staffing and inventory levels.
- **Research** – Costs are for the annual maintenance and upgrade of the Tourism economics Impact Calculator, Smith Travel Research and Zartico. VBN believes this research is a valuable tool in identifying key markets and assessing the return on investment these marketplaces may bring to our area. The research will also help quantify the economic impact of the business VBN has brought to the area to help illustrate the ROI that VBN returns to the community. Certain one-time projects undertaken in 2025 will not recur in 2026.
- **Digital/CRM/Hosting** – With a new agency of Record and PR firm we are continuing to overhaul the current website. A part of the project began in 2025 but will get going in earnest in late 2026 and continue into 2027.
- **FAM Tours** – In 2026, VBN again will be hosting a variety of Convention and Marketing related FAM tour opportunities. In 2025, Visit Buffalo hosted a couple of the larger FAM events thus accounting for the overall decrease in this line. The Marketing Department will continue to host a similar number of travel writers and media personnel throughout the year.

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- **Public Media Relations** – In 2025, the Marketing Department engaged The Lou Hammond Group to provide external media relations for VBN. The engagement will continue in 2026 with a similar level of expenditure expected.
- **Film/Video Productions** – in 2026 the marketing department will again continue to produce a series of videos to be created focusing in the areas cultural, art and culinary endeavors. Several projects scheduled for 2025 have been rescheduled in 2026, this along with the overall increase experienced in shooting video is accounting for the increase in this line item.
- **Technology and Equipment** – Various IT /Equipment related items as well as tradeshow booth updates etc.
- **Departmental Administrative Costs** – This is consistent with that spent in 2025. Includes items such as Professional Fees, office supplies, R&M and organizational dues.

**BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU, INC.**

**SUMMARY OF REVENUES and EXPENSES  
PROPOSED OPERATING BUDGET  
2026**

	<b>Proposed Budget 2026</b>	<b>Projected 2025</b>	<b>Budget 2025</b>	<b>Actual 2024</b>	<b>2026-2025 Budget \$ Variance</b>	<b>2026-2025 Budget % Variance</b>	<b>2026-2025 Projected \$ Variance</b>	<b>2026-2025 Projected % Variance</b>
<b>Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 7,884,850</b>	<b>\$ 9,567,476</b>	<b>\$ 8,961,680</b>	<b>\$ 5,280,864</b>	<b>\$ (1,076,830)</b>	<b>-12.02%</b>	<b>\$ (1,682,626)</b>	<b>-17.59%</b>
<b><u>Expenses:</u></b>								
Sales & Services Department Expenses	\$ 2,188,900	\$ 2,243,833	\$ 2,357,235	\$ 1,876,437	\$ (168,335)	-7.14%	\$ (54,933)	-2.45%
Marketing Department Expenses	4,026,230	4,690,549	4,690,260	2,010,876	(664,030)	-14.16%	(664,319)	-14.16%
Destination Development	287,850	323,880	358,100	409,394	(70,250)	-19.62%	(36,030)	-11.12%
Canalside Visitor Center	185,650	101,250	108,500	-	77,150	71.11%	84,400	83.36%
Administrative & Finance Department Expenses	1,089,620	1,059,691	1,056,645	1,023,450	32,975	3.12%	29,930	2.82%
Research	356,600	376,906	390,940	283,626	(34,340)	-8.78%	(20,306)	-5.39%
<b>Subtotal expenses</b>	<b>\$ 8,134,850</b>	<b>\$ 8,796,109</b>	<b>\$ 8,961,680</b>	<b>\$ 5,603,783</b>	<b>\$ (826,830)</b>	<b>-9.23%</b>	<b>\$ (661,259)</b>	<b>-7.52%</b>
<b>NET EXCESS OF REVENUES</b>								
<b>OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ (250,000)</b>	<b>\$ 771,367</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ (322,919)</b>	<b>\$ (250,000)</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>\$ (1,021,367)</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.  
 Operating Budget  
 Revenues  
 2026

	Proposed Budget <u>2026</u>	Projected <u>2025</u>	Budget <u>2025</u>	Actual <u>2024</u>	2026-2025 Budget <u>\$ Variance</u>	2026-2025 Budget <u>% Variance</u>	2026-2025 Projected <u>\$ Variance</u>	2026-2025 Projected <u>% Variance</u>
Erie County Grant	\$ 7,144,030	\$ 7,445,000	\$ 7,445,000	\$ 4,495,000	\$ (300,970)	-4.04%	\$ (300,970)	-4.04%
Erie County Sport Fishing Grant	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	-	0.00%	-	0.00%
Erie County Grant - Prior Year Overage	200,000	1,400,401	1,000,000	-	(800,000)	-80.00%	(1,200,401)	-85.72%
Erie County Grant - Restaurant Accesibilty	20,000	-	20,000	-	-	0.00%	20,000	-
Visitor Guide Advertising	190,000	204,800	204,800	206,600	(14,800)	-7.23%	(14,800)	-7.23%
Assessments - Convention	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NYS Matching Funds Program	49,000	49,775	49,775	51,048	(775)	-1.56%	(775)	-1.56%
Joint Co-op - Destination Development	2,320	5,000	18,500	3,911	(16,180)	-87.46%	(2,680)	-53.60%
Joint/Co-Op - Marketing	37,000	45,000	37,000	37,000	-	0.00%	(8,000)	-17.78%
Joint/Co-Op - Sales	24,000	25,000	25,000	21,268	(1,000)	-4.00%	(1,000)	-4.00%
Grant Revenues	125,000	-	120,000	416,963	5,000	4.17%	125,000	-
Merchandising Revenues - Conventions	500	500	500	146	-	0.00%	-	0.00%
Merchandising Revenues - Canalside	15,000	1,000	-	-	15,000	-	14,000	1400.00%
Interest Income	70,000	81,000	35,000	41,908	35,000	100.00%	(11,000)	-13.58%
Miscellaneous Income	3,000	305,000	1,105	2,020	1,895	171.49%	(302,000)	-99.02%
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$7,884,850</b>	<b>\$9,567,476</b>	<b>\$ 8,961,680</b>	<b>\$5,280,864</b>	<b>\$ (1,076,830)</b>	<b>-12.02%</b>	<b>\$ (1,682,626)</b>	<b>-17.59%</b>

Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.  
 Operating Budget  
 Total Expenses  
 2026

	<u>Proposed Budget 2026</u>	<u>Projected 2025</u>	<u>Budget 2025</u>	<u>Actual 2024</u>	<u>2026-2025 Budget \$ Variance</u>	<u>2026-2025 Budget % Variance</u>	<u>2026-2025 Projected \$ Variance</u>	<u>2026-2025 Projected % Variance</u>
<b><u>Personnel Costs:</u></b>								
Salaries	\$ 2,425,880	\$ 2,204,993	\$ 2,272,605	\$ 2,121,457	\$ 153,275	6.74%	\$ 220,887	10.02%
Payroll Taxes & Fringe Benefits	494,415	445,564	470,950	382,439	23,465	4.98%	48,851	10.96%
Professional Development - Staff	115,450	110,200	109,550	68,649	5,900	5.39%	5,250	4.76%
<b>Total Personnel Costs</b>	<b><u>\$3,035,745</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 2,760,757</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 2,853,105</u></b>	<b><u>\$2,572,545</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 182,640</u></b>	<b><u>6.40%</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 274,988</u></b>	<b><u>9.96%</u></b>
<b><u>Sales &amp; Marketing Expenditures:</u></b>								
Advertising	\$ 2,470,500	\$ 3,097,500	\$ 3,097,500	\$ 1,042,066	\$ (627,000)	-20.24%	\$ (627,000)	-20.24%
Convention Commitments	246,000	405,000	445,000	204,218	(199,000)	-44.72%	(159,000)	-39.26%
Visitor Guide	170,000	170,000	170,000	137,302	-	0.00%	-	0.00%
Tradeshows	235,000	246,000	245,000	202,255	(10,000)	-4.08%	(11,000)	-4.47%
Printing	30,000	26,000	20,000	11,824	10,000	50.00%	4,000	15.38%
Postage	3,100	3,202	3,500	2,451	(400)	-11.43%	(102)	-3.19%
Sales Bids & Promotions	130,000	144,293	135,000	129,405	(5,000)	-3.70%	(14,293)	-9.91%
Convention Sales & Services	38,000	33,366	36,000	31,230	2,000	5.56%	4,634	13.89%
Destination Development Programming	76,400	74,466	100,500	169,153	(24,100)	-23.98%	1,934	2.60%
Canalside Visitor Center	24,175	59,000	24,000	-	175	0.73%	(34,825)	-59.03%

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	<u>Proposed Budget 2026</u>	<u>Projected 2025</u>	<u>Budget 2025</u>	<u>Actual 2024</u>	<u>2026-2025 Budget \$ Variance</u>	<u>2026-2025 Budget % Variance</u>	<u>2026-2025 Projected \$ Variance</u>	<u>2026-2025 Projected % Variance</u>
<b>Travel &amp; Meetings</b>	50,000	51,668	58,000	43,266	(8,000)	-13.79%	(1,668)	-3.23%
<b>Receptions</b>	37,000	30,000	35,000	11,838	2,000	5.71%	7,000	23.33%
<b>Research</b>	200,500	248,750	252,000	163,371	(51,500)	-20.44%	(48,250)	-19.40%
<b>Digital Development/CRM Hosting</b>	221,000	262,151	263,750	127,626	(42,750)	-16.21%	(41,151)	-15.70%
<b>Familiarization Tours</b>	55,000	85,000	86,000	60,423	(31,000)	-36.05%	(30,000)	-35.29%
<b>Public/Media Relations</b>	199,000	221,000	221,000	54,125	(22,000)	-9.95%	(22,000)	-9.95%
<b>Freelance Writer/Graphic Artist</b>	95,000	135,000	140,000	64,637	(45,000)	-32.14%	(40,000)	-29.63%
<b>Regional Marketing</b>	5,000	5,000	5,000	4,046	-	0.00%	-	0.00%
<b>Promotional Items</b>	65,500	36,925	38,000	15,743	27,500	72.37%	28,575	77.39%
<b>Film/Video/Photo Productions</b>	148,000	90,000	90,000	32,665	58,000	64.44%	58,000	64.44%
<b>Photography</b>	70,000	75,000	75,000	38,679	(5,000)	-6.67%	(5,000)	-6.67%
<b>Promotional Packages</b>	30,000	34,000	34,000	3,459	(4,000)	-11.76%	(4,000)	-11.76%
<b>Total Sales &amp; Marketing Expenditures</b>	<u>4,599,175</u>	<u>5,533,322</u>	<u>5,574,250</u>	<u>2,549,782</u>	<u>\$ (975,075)</u>	<u>-17.49%</u>	<u>\$ (934,146)</u>	<u>-16.88%</u>
<b>Technology &amp; Equipment</b>	55,500	35,461	57,500	53,863	(2,000)	-3.48%	20,039	56.51%
<b>Department Administrative Expenses</b>	444,430	466,570	476,825	427,593	(32,395)	-6.79%	(22,140)	-4.75%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>\$ 8,134,850</u>	<u>\$ 8,796,109</u>	<u>\$ 8,961,680</u>	<u>\$ 5,603,783</u>	<u>\$ (826,830)</u>	<u>-9.23%</u>	<u>\$ (661,259)</u>	<u>-7.52%</u>