



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Integrated Marketing Services for Finger Lakes Wine Country ***Supporting a Transition to an Agency-Led Operational Model***

Date Issued: February 2, 2026

Response Deadline: February 27, 2026, by 4:00 p.m. EST

Contact Information

www.fingerlakeswinecountry.com/request-for-proposal

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Table of Contents

- A. Introduction and Background
- B. Overall Objective and Expected Outcomes
- C. Scope of Work
- D. Budget
- E. Staffing Transition to Agency-Led Model
- F. Proposal Requirements
- G. Evaluation Criteria
- H. Timeline
- I. Proposal Submission Instructions
- J. Legal Terms and Conditions

A. Introduction and Background

Finger Lakes Wine Country Tourism Marketing Association, Inc. (Finger Lakes Wine Country / FLWC) is a public and private funded not-for-profit destination marketing organization representing a multi-county region of New York State, including Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Yates counties. FLWC promotes the destination's tourism assets, distinctive sense of place, and the quality-of-life benefits that support increased visitation, longer stays, and enhanced regional economic impact.

FLWC is undergoing a significant operational transformation. Historically, the organization has functioned under a staff-led marketing and communications model. Beginning in 2026, FLWC will transition to a fully agency-led operating structure, with all day-to-day marketing strategy, execution, and reporting responsibilities being outsourced to a contracted marketing firm. Current staff positions are planned for elimination at the end of Q2 2026, at which time the selected firm will assume responsibility for all marketing functions and will report directly to the FLWC Board of Directors.

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to identify a highly qualified marketing agency to assume leadership and execution of Finger Lakes Wine Country's earned, owned, and paid media programs; oversee brand stewardship; manage content development; and implement strategic marketing initiatives designed to elevate the Finger Lakes Wine Country regional brand.

FLWC's Board of Directors seeks a partner with deep destination marketing expertise, a proven ability to drive measurable brand and visitation outcomes, and operational capacity sufficient to fully assume the responsibilities previously handled by internal staff.

B. Overall Objective and Expected Outcomes

The selected agency will:

1. **Take over all day-to-day marketing operations** no later than the end of Q2 2026, functioning as FLWC's outsourced marketing department.
2. **Steward and elevate the Finger Lakes Wine Country brand**, increasing awareness, affinity, engagement, and intent to visit among core target audiences.
3. **Create and execute integrated earned, owned, and paid media programs** aligned with FLWC's strategic goals, brand guidelines, and Board directives.
4. **Provide centralized marketing leadership**, including annual planning, budgeting recommendations, content strategy, campaign ideation, and tactical execution.
5. **Offer comprehensive performance reporting** to the FLWC Board, including KPIs, analytics dashboards, insights, and recommendations for continuous improvement.

6. **Coordinate closely with county partners, wineries, trails, attractions, lodging businesses, and other stakeholder entities** to ensure cohesive regional storytelling and brand alignment.

Expected outcomes include measurable increases in overall digital visibility and discoverability of the Finger Lakes Wine Country brand, including website traffic, search and AI-driven discovery, social and email engagement, earned media value, audience and partner growth, partner satisfaction, and overall marketplace awareness and recognition.

C. Scope of Work

The firm selected will assume full responsibility for all integrated marketing activities previously executed by the FLWC internal team.

Scope includes, but is not limited to:

1. Brand Stewardship

- Apply and uphold FLWC Brand Guidelines across all marketing channels.
- Ensure consistency of narrative, tone of voice, visual identity, and messaging.

2. Content Strategy, Creation, and Management

- Develop annual and quarterly content strategies.
- Produce photography, videography, editorial stories, blogs, itineraries, social media content, newsletters, and advertising assets.
- Manage the FLWC website content (in partnership with FLWC's web developer), including optimization for traditional search as well as AI-driven discovery platforms such as Large Language Models (LLMs) and Search Generative Experiences (SGE), through conversational content design and clear, authoritative summaries.

3. Owned Media Management

- Manage all FLWC social media channels with high-frequency, high-quality content.
- Provide community management, engagement strategies, and influencer partnerships.
- Produce ongoing email marketing, including automation and segmentation strategies.
- Maintain and update all content—articles, guides, partner features, landing pages—across owned platforms.

4. Earned Media & Public Relations

- Develop annual PR strategy and media engagement plans.
- Conduct proactive media outreach, host press trips, manage media relations, and coordinate with travel writers.
- Generate earned media placements that elevate FLWC's national and regional profile.

5. Paid Marketing & Digital Advertising

- Develop paid media strategy across digital, print, connected TV, out-of-home, and other channels as appropriate.
- Implement campaigns designed to increase visitation, conversion, and brand awareness.
- Manage media planning, buying, trafficking, optimization, and reporting.

6. Annual Strategic Marketing Planning

- Prepare an annual integrated marketing plan, including KPIs tied to FLWC Board objectives.
- Recommend budget allocations across channels and initiatives.
- Provide quarterly strategic reviews and ongoing plan optimization.

7. Research Utilization and Continuous Improvement

- Apply existing market research, brand work, and audience insights to drive targeting and messaging.
- Recommend additional research or measurement tools if needed.

8. Reporting & Analytics

- Provide monthly reporting on all core channels.
- Deliver quarterly Executive Dashboards to the FLWC Board.
- Deliver quarterly reports for FLWC investors.
- Offer real-time analytics views if available.

9. Stakeholder Relations

- Engage regularly with county partners, wine trails, attractions, lodging entities, and experience providers.
- Ensure representation of diverse assets across the region.

10. Transition Management

- Work collaboratively with existing FLWC staff through Q2 2026 to ensure a seamless transfer of duties.
- Assume full operational responsibility by the end of Q2 2026, reporting directly to FLWC's Board.

D. Budget

Total Project Budget: \$275,000 - \$300,000

This budget must encompass all services including but not limited to:

- Strategy development and planning
- Content creation and copywriting
- Media planning and placement
- Account management fees
- Tools and software subscriptions required for execution
- Performance tracking and reporting
- Any out-of-pocket expenses

Proposals should clearly delineate estimated costs for:

- Professional services/agency fees
- Media buying/paid advertising spend
- Specify any media commission fees
- Content creation (including any photography/videography if proposed, although not preferred)
- Tools and technology
- Other expenses

Note on Asset Utilization:

We have substantial existing photography and video assets for Finger Lakes Wine Country. The first year's contract should focus primarily on utilizing current assets, with minimal additional content capture budgets included in proposals. Creative use of existing materials is strongly encouraged.

E. Staffing Transition to Agency-Led Model

To ensure clarity and transparency:

- FLWC will phase out internal staff roles by the end of Q2 2026.

- The selected firm must have the capacity, structure, and readiness to serve as the organization's de facto marketing department beginning immediately upon contract execution, with full operational control by July 1, 2026 (or earlier if mutually agreed).

Agencies should describe in detail how they will manage onboarding, knowledge transfer, and continuity of service during this transition.

F. Proposal Requirements

Proposal Format:

- Maximum Length: 20 pages (single-sided), excluding case studies linked externally
- File Format: PDF
- File Size: Maximum 25MB

Proposals must include:

1. **Statement of Understanding**
Demonstrate familiarity with FLWC's mission, brand, and strategic goals.
2. **Agency Background and Relevant Experience**
Highlight destination marketing, tourism, hospitality, lifestyle branding, and integrated media execution.
3. **Proposed Team Structure**
Identify team members, roles, relevant skill sets, and availability.
4. **Approach to Each Scope Area**
Provide methodology, work plans, tools, and processes.
5. **Transition & Onboarding Plan**
Describe how the agency will assume operations from a staff-led model.
6. **Proposed KPIs and Reporting Framework**
Include examples of how brand visibility will be tracked in AI-driven environments.
7. **Fee Structure & Cost Proposal**
Provide retainer, project-based costs, hourly rates, and anticipated budget recommendations.
8. **Use of Subcontractors**
Identify roles, qualifications, and scope.
9. **Insurance Requirements**
Confirm ability to meet required coverage levels.
10. **References**
Provide three references with similar project experience.

G. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

1. Demonstrated expertise in integrated destination marketing.
2. Proven track record managing full-service marketing operations.
3. Understanding of FLWC's brand, audiences, and competitive environment.
4. Clarity and feasibility of the proposed transition plan.
5. Quality and seniority of proposed team.
6. Ability to meet the project timeline.
7. Evidence of creativity, strategic thinking, and alignment with FLWC's brand ethos.
8. Competitive fee structure and value.
9. Required insurance coverage and legal compliance.

H. Timeline

- **RFP Release:** February 2, 2026
- **Question Submission Deadline:** February 12, 2026
- **Response to Questions Posted:** February 17, 2026
- **Proposal Submission Deadline:** February 27, 2026, by 4:00 p.m. EST
- **Interviews / Finalist Presentations):** March 23, 2026
- **Vendor Selection:** March 27, 2026
- **Contract Execution:** April 1, 2026
- **Transition Period:** April 1 – June 30, 2026
- **Full Agency-Led Operations Begin:** July 1, 2026

The initial contract term runs through December 31, 2026, with the potential for renewal in one-year increments based on performance and mutual agreement.

I. Proposal Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted in PDF format and uploaded [here](#).

J. Legal Terms and Conditions

1. FLWC shall own all work produced associated with the contract.
2. All firms and independent consultants engaged under the contract for services will provide and maintain certificates of insurance for general and automobile liability insurance as follows:
 - a. General Liability \$1,000,000 minimum per occurrence
 - b. Automobile Liability \$1,000,000 minimum per occurrence
 - c. Errors and Omissions \$1,000,000 minimum per occurrence
3. The selected firm shall indemnify and hold harmless Finger Lakes Wine Country, its board members and employees, and all stakeholders, their officers, employees and agents from and against all claims, damages, losses and expenses caused in whole or in part by any negligent act or omission of the firm, its consultants, subcontractors, anyone directly or indirectly employed by any of them, or anyone

for whose acts may be liable, except where caused by the active negligence, or willful misconduct by a stakeholder entity.

4. FLWC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals submitted and to request additional information of any proposal team.

Closing

Finger Lakes Wine Country looks forward to reviewing proposals and identifying an exceptional agency partner to lead the organization into its new agency-led era. We appreciate your interest and the creativity, professionalism, and strategic discipline you will bring to this transformational role.