



Midyear 2022 - CVB Report to the Board

The first half of 2022 has been very productive. Matching Funds grant reports have been submitted, the 2023 CVB budget request was submitted to the STPB budget committee, our summer team is in place to support visitor experiences at both visitor centers, and the team is back on the road at tradeshow and sales missions. We’ve reaped the benefits of winter marketing campaigns and fine-tuned messaging based on the findings. We had the honor of hosting the New York State Destination Marketing Organizations Q2 meeting, allowing for statewide collaboration and planning.

And, we fully vacated the East Shore Drive building. Here is a brief snapshot of the work accomplished by the CVB team in the first six months of 2022:

BUSINESS & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The 2022 Farm to Fork Agriculinary Microgrant Program has a total of \$20,000 for reimbursable microgrants of up to \$2,000 to match up to 50% of matching funds toward proposed projects. Grant funding was made available to (1) food and/or beverage producers, (2) farmers, and (3) restaurants/ food service businesses using a significant percentage of locally sourced menu offerings. We approved six grants in the first round of applications for projects located in Trumansburg, Ithaca, Freeville, and Slaterville Springs communities: Bright Raven Farm & Apiary; Café DeWitt; Hazelnut Kitchen; Hopshire Brewery; Laughing Goat Fiber Farm; and South Hill Cider.

The second round of funding closed on June 20, 2022, with applicants from the Ithaca and Trumansburg communities. We awarded funding to four businesses: Angelhearts Diner; South Hill Cider; West Haven Farm; and Gimme! Coffee. The remaining grants will be awarded on a rolling application basis.

Our grant coordinator, Cloud Kelley, will complete site visits at midpoint and completion of each project to verify reimbursement eligibility and document projects. The CVB marketing team will include a “Farm to Fork highlights” section in each CVB partner newsletter through the end of the year.

MARKETING

In June, VisitIthaca.com received 60,400 sessions overall in June 2022, a 14% decrease over June 2021 and a 2% increase over 2019. Organic search brought in the majority of sessions with 45,700 in June, a 14% decrease year-over-year. Organic Search sent 45,700 sessions to the site, a 14% decrease compared to 2021 and a 12% increase compared to 2019. Our agency reports this is a trend with other DMOs, likely due to the removal of a wave of travel restrictions in June 2021.

VisitIthaca.com

website traffic	Jan-June 2022	Jan-June 2021
Total Sessions	268,900	237,723
Unique Users	199,169	187,192
Session from Organic Search	186,000	186,750

New York City led the greatest increase in traffic with 18,000 sessions, up from 7,200 last year. Website sessions by geographic area for the first 6 months of 2022 vs 2021 saw the biggest increase from NYC (up 59% YoY); Philadelphia (up 35% YoY); Washington DC (up 77% YoY); Buffalo; Toronto; and local traffic

Q2 2022 Social:

	Q2 2022	Q1 2022		Q2 2022	Q1 2022
Instagram followers	16.6 K	15.9 K	Facebook followers	42 K	41.9 K
Instagram Account Reach	46.5 K	105.4 K	Facebook Reach	103 K	190.5 K
Ig Post Interactions	14.4 K	12.6 K	Page Engagements	11 K	22.2 K
Ig Story Reach	44.5 K	24.8 K			

Visit Ithaca Waterfalls Challenge January-June 2022

During the first 6 months of the year, there were 1,136 pass sign-ups and 2,651 check-ins; 925 of the pass sign-ups using a zip code outside of Tompkins County.

In Q1, 27 people completed the pass and 36 people reached the 10 locations benchmark. In Q2, 38 people completed the pass and 85 people reached the 10 locations benchmark. To encourage engagement, a targeted message was sent to unused passholders, reminding them about their pass and area offerings. We also communicated with 578 opt-in marketing contacts from the pass with seasonal travel reminders, and sent emails directly to our area accommodations.

“This geologic feature is certainly worth bragging about and makes the surrounding area one of the most stunning destinations for hiking and swimming in naturally formed channels. Download the Ithaca Waterfalls Challenge digital passport to keep track of its 22 waterfalls and other natural attractions, from the more gentle slopes of Buttermilk Falls and Buttermilk Creek to the diving board perched over a deep swimming hole at Robert Treman State Park...” -- *This New York State Region Is One of the Best Places to Go in 2022 by Travel + Leisure, May 6, 2022*

Campaigns and Advertising

Spring landing page “Retreat to Ithaca” offers saw 2,219 pageviews with an average time on page of 2:09. In March we launched a digital Google Display Network campaign through BrandUSA/Miles Partnership **targeting Canadian leisure travelers, and Philadelphia**, which has resulted in 5,314 sessions to visitithaca.com.

We continued a programmatic digital campaign for prospecting & retargeting to people with the intent to travel, focusing on the geographic areas within a drive radius as well as those residing in our Ithaca International Airport direct connection cities. In June we also began targeting LGBTQ affinity travelers.

PR:

We have responded to 22 media inquiries through the first six months of 2022, compared to 15 through the first six months of 2021. Ithaca and Tompkins County has had 17 media mentions in 2022 as a result of responses to media inquiries, press releases sent out and relationships that have been built with writers and influencers.

- Partners included in coverage include state parks in Tompkins County, Ithaca Falls, Bar Argos/Argos Inn, Cornell Botanic Gardens, Finger Lakes Cider House, Firelight Camps, Hazelnut Kitchen, Ithaca Bakery, Ithaca Beer Co., Ithaca Farmers Market, Johnson Museum of Art, La Tourelle, Moosewood, Dewitt Mall, William Henry Miller Inn, Ithaca Downtown Conference Center and Nagmyal Monastery/Dalai Lama Library and Learning Center.
- June media hits include:
 - [Roadtrip Report: Finger Lakes Wine Country](#) by Alisha Miranda who we hosted in November 2021 during cider-focused media FAM tour
 - [Here Are Some Ideas For A Solo Date "Big Apple Style" This Summer](#) by Travel Noire

- [Taste of the Finger Lakes – A Night of Delicious Bites and Sips in Ithaca](#) by Wanderlust on a Budget
- [Locals, visitors see benefits as tourism bounces back](#) by Tompkins Weekly

SALES

The sales team was on the road for most of the first half of 2022. We participated in six group travel shows and two meetings market trade shows. In addition, we hosted a sales mission to the Albany/Capital District to reengage with meeting clients and represented Wine, Waters, and Wonders partnership at IPW, the largest international buyer tradeshow that takes place in the United States.

To support our tradeshow presence, the sales team coordinated advertising placements and sponsorships, including “Hidden Gems” snippet to fulfill an OMCA Road Explorer request, “Urban Adventures” for VisitUSA-Germany, presenting sponsor at Upstate NY MPI Gala, and two educational sessions at ESSAE Annual Conference.

We hosted five German media with our in-country German representative as a result of our partnership with Wine, Waters and Wonders. They explored waterfalls and an Experience! The Finger Lakes’ wine pairing dinner at Coltivare. Ribanna Ginsberg of Ruck Zuck Urlaub completed a self-guided tour of upstate NY in May. This visit was a direct result of an appointment at ILNY Virtual Marketplace at the end of 2021.

We revamped our Meeting Sales Kit, adding information about the Ithaca Downtown Conference Center, upgraded and updated our CVENT listings, and created Interactive Floorplans via Social Tables for the Conference Center. We also launched the Threshold 360 Program and began capturing 360° virtual tours of various partner locations. The goal of this program is to create an immersive virtual visitor experience, enhancing our efforts to target the meetings market.

Sales Team Leads for Jan-June 2022:

April 2022	Definite	Tentative	Lost	Grand Total
# of leads	16	7	10	35
Total room nights	1701	674	1671	4046
Economic Impact	\$447,578	\$489,745	\$493,740	\$1,431,063

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The first half of 2022 has felt as close to normal for the Visitor Experience team since 2019. We welcomed back Joseph Guidi and Marybeth Bunge both who were with us last season, and added Abigail Leonard to help us greet visitors this summer.

Touchpoints at both the Downtown Visitor Center and the Overlook at Taughannock are strong. Mid-year traffic is 88% ahead of January through June of 2021 at the Downtown Visitor Center. Taughannock traffic is down 14% from 2021, but still 36% higher than 2019 visitation.

The Arrival to Departure tourism training program has gone back to live final classes. We have and will continue to make updates to the program as we anticipate significant changes in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Off-site activations and Ithaca 101 programs continue to be successful. We've been at both college campuses talking with prospective students and families, providing a concierge booth for meetings and conferences in the area and held training sessions for both the Hospitality Employment Training program and Cornell conference services summer staff.

We were thrilled to bring back our Brochure Exchange in June with a record-setting 40 businesses signed up to participate.

By the Numbers:

	Jan-June 2022	Jan-June 2021	YOY %
Phone	647	721	-10%
ESD Traffic*	65	48	35%
DVC Traffic*	1750	785	123%
Taug. Traffic	12137	13784	-12%
Chats	492	847	-42%
TG Requests	1727	2134	-19%
Off-Site Events	7117	979	627%
Total	23935	19298	24%

*ESD VIC closed to public

*DT VIC staff capacity in 2021 was three 8-hour days compared to instead of six 7.5-hour days.