

CASE STUDY

RETHINKING ROI

APPLYING THE IMPACT MULTIPLIER TO INCLUSIVE TOURISM



INTRODUCTION



Economic development, visitor spending, and attendance numbers have long defined success in tourism. While these metrics remain important, they tell only part of the story. At Tour Cayuga, we believe true impact lies in how tourism affects people, the stories we tell, the communities we represent, and the sense of welcome we create for both residents and visitors.

That belief is what led us to adopt and promote the Impact Multiplier framework, introduced in our white paper. This equation gives us a new lens—one that challenges the tourism industry to look beyond dollars and data, and ask:

Are we creating places where everyone feels they belong?

APPLYING THE IMPACT MULTIPLIER TO INCLUSIVE TOURISM

Tour Cayuga is using the *Impact Multiplier* to shape a more inclusive and authentic destination. Here's how each part of the equation plays out in our work:

Growth of Awareness: We're expanding the understanding of who tourism serves. Inclusive tourism requires us to ask: whose stories are being told? Who sees themselves in our marketing? Who feels safe and welcomed in our spaces? From internal workshops to public programming, we're intentionally building awareness across our team and our partners.

Leadership Wins: Our national presentations at City Nation Place, Destinations International Social Impact Summit, TAP's "Welcoming All 2.0" forum and winning the NYSTIA DEI award, highlight Tour Cayuga's commitment to creating a destination where all are welcome. These platforms allow us to lead by example, sharing strategies that elevate underrepresented voices and prioritize visitor experience over optics.

Influence on Future Guidance: We are aligning future policies, partnerships, and promotions with the values of inclusive tourism. This means evaluating more than attendance. We consider how programming shapes community identity, how residents experience tourism, and how we can balance promotion with responsibility. This also includes investing in the next generation: for the fourth year in a row, we've partnered with Travel Unity to host a Youth Summit, inviting local high school students to explore the role of tourism in their lives—and their potential place in it.

THE LIMITATIONS OF TRADITIONAL ROI

Take, for example, a cultural event that draws a large crowd. From a traditional ROI lens, the event is a success. But what if it doesn't reflect the diversity of the community, or creates barriers to access for residents?

Tourism that doesn't serve all stakeholders misses the mark and over time, can erode local support.

In contrast to traditional ROI measures like crowd size. The impact multiplier lead us to consider that the true impact is seen in the depth of connection and representation it fosters: through events like Greatness Weekend, Harriet Tubman's Legacy: Faith and Freedom, and the Chawne Kimber textile exhibition, residents felt seen, underrepresented voices were elevated, and visitors engaged with Cayuga County's authentic stories, laying the groundwork for deeper, trust-based partnerships. These events were made possible partly by grants provided by Tour Cayuga. That is the Impact Multiplier in action.



CONCLUSION: METRICS THAT REFLECT MEANING



Tourism success must be redefined to include connection, cultural representation, and community ownership. Through the Impact Multiplier, Tour Cayuga is measuring what matters balancing economic growth with the creation of a destination that is truly inclusive, welcoming, and sustainable for all.

***We're not just counting heads, we're creating space.
And that, to us, is the greatest return on investment.***