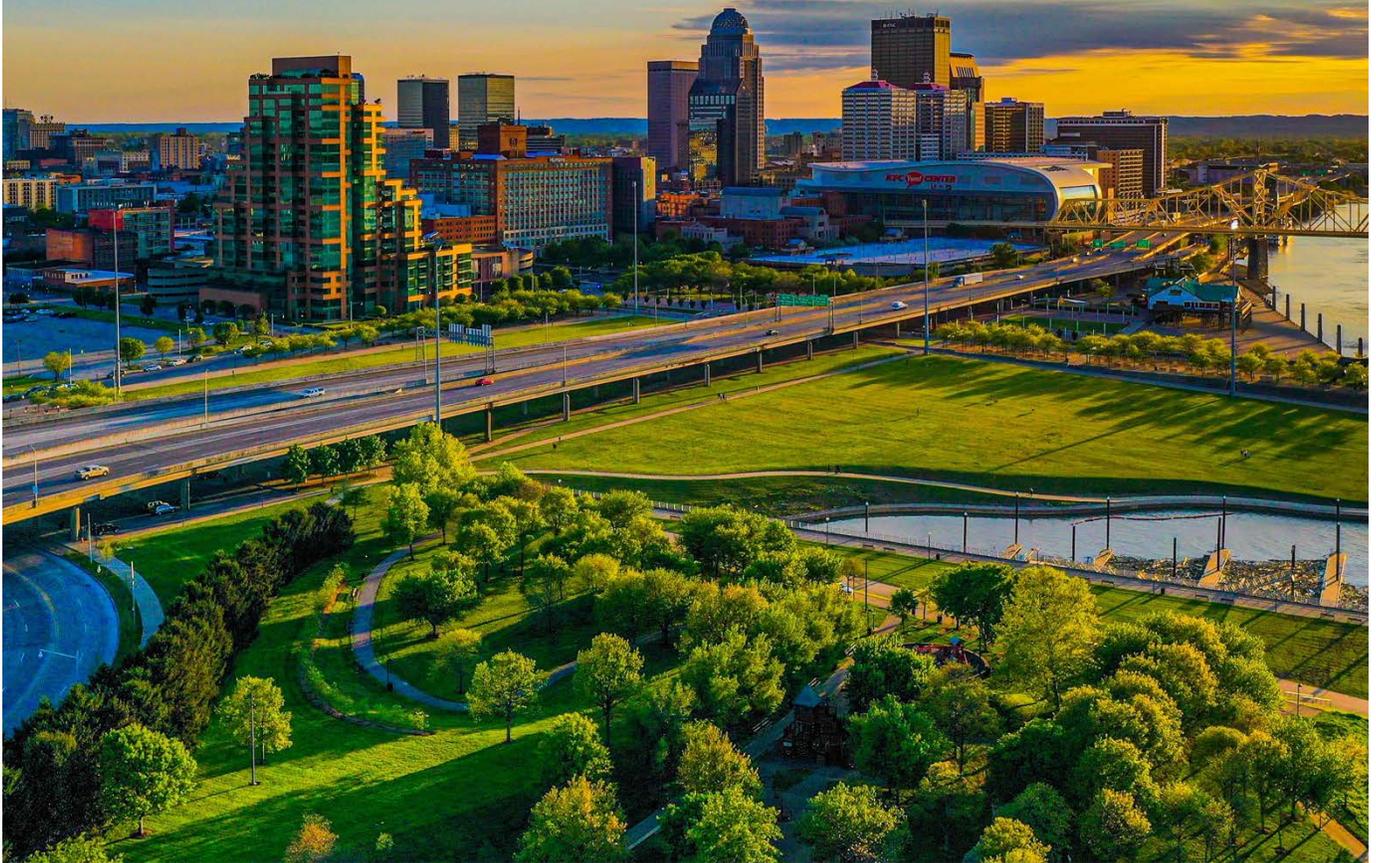




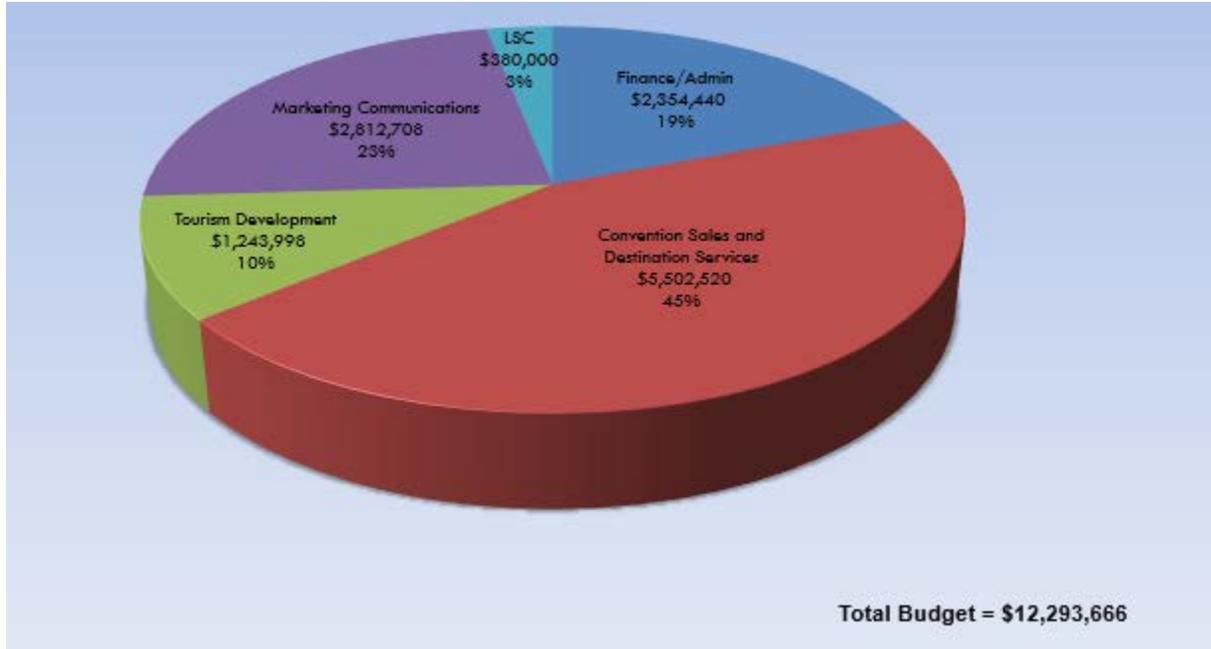
# *NAVIGATING THE NEW NORMAL*



## **LOUISVILLE TOURISM'S DESTINATION SALES & MARKETING PLAN 2020**

## FINANCE and AMINISTRATION

### Revised Post-COVID Budget



## DESTINATION OVERVIEW

Louisville as a destination was on a roll. Following a record decade expansion, nearly the entire hospitality infrastructure transformed, especially in the past three years as a renovated and expanded downtown convention center spurred the simultaneous development of new and renovated hotel projects and investment by private industry in the city's primary visitor corridor and beyond. A new tourism market built around sports-related travel highlighting a signature Kentucky industry while also growing new audiences to the city's other heritage attractions had been delivering 16.4 million annual visitors. Neighborhoods offering authentic experiences including local dining and lodging had become vital assets to attracting new visitors including adventure-driven millennials.

Enter a global pandemic. Louisville had a convention-packed calendar and leisure events expected to bring \$3.5 Billion in economic impact to the city and support nearly 60,000 jobs. In March as conventions and events canceled, hotels and attractions closed and many restaurants shuttered, the hospitality industry furloughed 75% of the workforce.

As Kentucky entered various phases of re-opening, the recovery started small with all closed hotels open by the rescheduled Kentucky Derby in September. Restaurants started to pick up with outdoor dining options and 85% of Louisville's attractions reopened. The outlook for leisure travel was hopeful based on travel forecasts and pent up demand. This did not materialize as much in Louisville as in our competitive set. Though the effects of COVID-19 remain the primary factor for lost business, the city's brand took a hit with the national press generated from the death of Breonna Taylor and the sustained protests that shuttered much of downtown for months. As many other American cities experienced similar shutdowns, Louisville's situation seemed to have affected local perception of the downtown area more than outside perception, though a safe image must be regained for growth. This will need to be communicated locally and nationally.

Louisville's tourism marketing budget has been revised several times during these dual crises and strategies continue to evolve. A long-term Destination Strategic Plan was built during this time and will be implemented over the next five years. New initiatives in the Diversity and Inclusion arena have been developed and will continue to play a role in Louisville Tourism's recovery and rebound.

Louisville has been uniquely positioned over the past decade for driving a brand around the concept of one of Kentucky's most authentic assets as the homeplace of Bourbon. This theme has proven successful as a key lead message in advertising and earned media campaigns across markets, including convention development. As the nation gets back to the business of travel on the other side of the pandemic, this differentiation will be essential to driving interest in the destination overall and helping draw attention to ALL of the city's diverse offerings.

Travelers with pent up demand will search out authentic, one-of-a-kind experiences and Louisville's spirit only continues to mature. It's a spirit of hospitality unlike anyplace else and is embodied by icons such as Muhammad Ali, Louisville Slugger, and three-year-old thoroughbreds that begin their quest for a crown at the longest running consecutive sporting event in America, the Kentucky Derby. It's a spirit that defines Louisville's culture and compassion, the arts and parks, the creative energy, the highly acclaimed culinary scene and the authentic hospitality of our workforce. And it's the collective resilience of that workforce, though smaller in number temporarily, that will help us regain the 16.4 million annual visitors we served before.

# MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

The Marketing Communications staff works to create awareness about Louisville as a sought-after and unique destination for individual and group travelers through positive publicity, innovative advertising, outstanding marketing and sales collateral, robust digital and social media campaigns and differentiating brand strategy.

## OBJECTIVE

Utilize core brand pillars to position Louisville as the premiere destination for meetings and leisure travel by increasing brand awareness in key target markets to increase ROI and help achieve strategic sales goals. Work to rebuild image and brand.

## OVERARCHING STRATEGIES

Pivot advertising to drive visitation in current traveling markets:

- Frequent Individual Traveler (FIT/Leisure) – Short term travel focus

- Group Tour – small affinity group focus

Sustain branding in Convention market for long term business

Target earned media efforts to rebuild Louisville's brand and awareness of new product

Evolve digital programs to reflect a lifestyle brand that will grow engagement

Continue weekly communication with a regional drive audience to inspire short term travel

Launch marketing support for the new Bourbon City's Black Heritage programming

## LEISURE MARKETING OVERVIEW

Louisville had developed as a leisure tourist destination prior to the pandemic. We will work to recover this traffic in key feeder markets and speak to our target at every point of the travel purchase funnel. We will also focus efforts to support leisure development sales initiatives to increase visitation and attraction ticket sales.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

### PRIMARY: General Leisure Traveler

Adults ages 25-54 which encompasses of both Millennials (adults age 24-39) and Gen Xers (adults age 40-55), with a sweet spot is 25-45 year old's. As of 2019 Millennials are the largest generation in the work force and claim the biggest share of the U.S. population. These are highly connected travelers who value authentic experiences including bourbon and culinary highlights.

### SECONDARY: Affinity group leaders

This is the key person among a group of friends, club or organization that plans travel for the group. A leisure traveler in regard to general demographics with the added need for affordability and accessibility as it pertains to a small to medium sized group. Small group travel is trending in markets that are covid-ready and perceived safe.

## FEEDER CITIES\*

1. Indianapolis
2. Cincinnati
3. Atlanta
4. Chicago
5. Nashville
6. Detroit
7. Columbus, OH
8. St. Louis
9. Memphis
10. Washington, DC

*\*These are the top cities feeding travel to Louisville according to Destination Analysts. Markets within close proximity to facilitate a day trip have been removed with the goal of overnight guests.*

## MARKETING STRATEGY

As we continue to increase awareness of Louisville as a top leisure destination, we will focus our strategy to reach to our target at every point of the travel purchase funnel to achieve sustained brand awareness. This will be achieved by various tactical approaches including paid advertising, public relations, marketing partnerships, email marketing, content marketing & social media.

## MESSAGING STRATEGY

We will continue to implement brand-centered messaging and push Louisville as 'Bourbon City,' the new product of Bourbon City's Black Heritage. This Bourbon City message will be featured across all markets and will focus on the spirit of bourbon and how it ties together all four of Louisville's core brand pillars. Since the inception of the new brand platform and strategic planning we have not simply launched a single year campaign or initiative but a long-term approach to destination marketing. As the pandemic plays out, we will also focus on a "safe to travel" message.

In addition to a consistent brand message, we will tailor messaging to hit on Louisville's value proposition – easy to get here, affordable and diverse things to do for all travelers.

## TACTICS

### Paid Advertising Campaigns

Paid advertising efforts will consist of campaigns targeted to reach consumers at as many touch points as possible along the travel purchase funnel. The highly targeted flighted campaigns will focus on brand awareness, allowing us to cast a wider net and garner more attention from our target audience. Based on a 2019 Destination Analysis study 96% of traveler said they were highly likely to make a return trip to Louisville, and 75% of Louisville visitors arrived in the destination by personal vehicle. With that in mind we will launch two flighted campaigns in the spring, one focused on return visit and the other on road trips.

- Flight #1 – Return Visits
  - March – April 2021
- Flight #2 – Road Trips
  - May – June 2021

Some of the key media outlets will include:

- Highly targeted out of home placements in top feeder markets (ie. Billboards, Transit, signage)
  - High impact out of home placements in key 'road trip' feeder markets to coincide with our digital flights to garner additional awareness and add another touchpoint in highly valued and highly trafficked areas of that market.
- Connected TV Vendors such as YouTube TV, DirectTV Now and others
- Programmatic digital buys
- National & Regional print publications that align with brand pillars

Reach and engagement will be the primary measurement when choosing media outlets, but a strong call to action that generates conversion will be incorporated and now tracked with a new conversion software.

Arrivalist, an analytics and conversion attribution software will help measure the effectiveness of our digital campaigns in real-time. This software will also provide greater insights on visitation behaviors, so nimbleness of Louisville's campaigns and message will remain very important to achieve the overall campaign goals.

### **Online Travel Agency (OTA) Partnerships**

Louisville will continue to have an annual presence with the top US OTA, Expedia Brands. Expedia Brands, which include top site like Hotels.com, Travelocity, VRBO and more, account for about 70% share of the U.S. market. As OTA's continue to fight for market share with the hotel brands, they remain a heavy source for end of the funnel travel research, especially during a time when discount travel is important.

### **Email Marketing**

In 2020, we added to our stable of seasonal e-newsletters and digital event-specific communication with a fiscal year-long Sustained Leisure Event Email Campaign (or SLEEC). More than a weekly newsletter, SLEEC is supported holistically with video, web and social media elements. It is intended to be an "immersion to conversion" campaign to reach primarily leisure visitors in a 100-mile drive-market radius. The newsletter is a round-up of curated events leveraged to inspire short term travel and build brand awareness for long term and repeat travel business. Note that as "events" largely became virtual, we pivoted to feature more exhibit style offerings or itinerary experiences. SLEEC continues to utilize two signature Kentucky industries to provide a framing design element incorporating horse-racing and bourbon terminology. Each week, events are curated by the Tourism Development staff that most closely align with the city's brand pillars. The Marketing and Communications staff designs and distributes the email campaign to a growing list of subscribers and monitors conversion.

Leisure development is the primary purpose of SLEEC with the knowledge that a strong leisure brand is often the first interaction potential meeting planners have with a destination. The program also features a potential community relations angle to have locals become brand ambassadors. Though a crowded marketplace exists for local event roundups, the intent is for the content to be compelling enough to grow a local follower audience as well to keep citizens informed of Louisville's offerings.

**Social Media**

The use of social media platforms in tourism marketing continues to provide a significant connection to consumers and one of the most powerful means of building and increasing brand awareness. It also served as primary tool to keep consumers informed (including a local audience) of timely information during the pandemic. We will continue to develop social media strategies and campaigns across three primary platforms – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter complimenting the themes of our traditional marketing efforts. We will continue providing daily content in line with an annual editorial calendar and supplemented with news in real time from our many industry assets.

## CONVENTION OVERVIEW

Louisville's convention package continues to grow as hotel development continues even during the pandemic. Louisville has a seat at the table with some of the largest destinations and was listed the top market for hotel demand by CBRE for Q1 2019. Post pandemic, the city is positioned to compete for an additional 25% of the national share of meeting and convention business with a renovated and expanded Kentucky International Convention Center open for business after a two-year closure. Louisville's brand was at a high level of national awareness with meeting planners and decision makers. We will continue to capitalize on this, further Louisville's growing reputation as a premier meetings destination and ensure meeting planners that Louisville and our facilities are safe and ready for their meetings.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

### **PRIMARY: National and Local Convention Meeting Planners/Sports Event Owners and Rights Holders**

Those who plan meetings/events, solicit bids and negotiate agreements, perform site visits, influence site selections, coordinate services at event and monitor event activities.

### **SECONDARY: Association Executives and CEOs**

The key influencers/decision makers and organizational leaders of professional associations.

## TARGET CITIES

1. **Washington, DC**
2. **Chicago**
3. **Atlanta**
4. **Indianapolis**
5. Minneapolis
6. Kansas City
7. Milwaukee
8. **St. Louis**
9. **Nashville**

\***BOLD** cities represent crossover markets (ie. both leisure and convention)

## MARKETING STRATEGIES

Prior to the pandemic, Louisville Tourism had formed integrated marketing and event partnerships with leading industry associations and media outlets in order to leverage the city's brand assets and generate sales leads. Many of these including trade show marketing and have had to pivot to other ways to reach the meetings audience. We have invested time and resources in virtual events including tastings and cooking demos leveraging our in-house Bourbon and Biscuits programming. This has resulted in positive feedback from the industry partners and meeting planner audience as a unique tool to remain engaged with Louisville's brand.

These partnerships have worked to align our strategies across markets and been a vital tool in building and maintaining brand awareness. Louisville Tourism will continue to host events (virtual, hybrid and in-person when able) and industry shows that will allow our target audience to immerse themselves in the destination's culture and offerings and fully experience the authenticity of our brand.

## **MESSAGING STRATEGY**

As Louisville's meeting and convention package continues to evolve and expand, we will continue marketing an ongoing development message. In addition to leveraging Louisville's core brand pillars, the following will continue as key message drivers in this market:

- Newly renovated and expanded KICC
- Hotel development (both the increase in rooms and ongoing renovations)
- Walkability of downtown with a tight concentration of dining and attractions
- Safety – pushing GBAC messaging

## **TACTICAL APPROACH**

### **Industry Partnerships**

Louisville will continue partnerships with the following meetings industry organizations:

- American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)
- Association Forum
- ConferenceDirect
- CVENT
- Experient
- HelmsBriscoe
- Meeting Planners International (MPI)
- Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA)
- International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE)
- Northstar Media

These industry partnerships will not only reach Louisville's target convention market segments but also allow us to reach our primary and secondary convention audiences in our target cities nationwide. While these partnerships reach nationwide, we will focus on the top three convention cities and partnerships listed below:

- Washington, DC – ASAE (38% ASAE's executive membership)
- Chicago – Association Forum, MPI
- Atlanta – MPI, PCMA

### **Advertising**

As we continue to see success in our advertising & media partnerships, we will build upon those in the future when budgets rebound. For the short term, this will be primarily through targeting meeting planners directly through digital platforms, such as:

- Growing our partnership with CVENT, which has shown over a 30% increase in RFPs to the destination over the last year.

# GROUP TOUR OVERVIEW

## TARGET AUDIENCE

### PRIMARY: Motor coach owners/operators

These are typically the key decision maker(s) that include Louisville in their guided tour. Large companies but also small business owners; often times a husband and wife family-owned businesses, typically ABA members. Skews towards middle-class income level of \$50K - \$75K.

## TARGET CITIES

1. Cleveland
2. Cincinnati
3. **Chicago**
4. St. Louis
5. Columbus
6. **Indianapolis**
7. Dearborn, MI
8. Chattanooga
9. **Nashville**
10. Philadelphia

\***BOLD** cities represent crossover markets (ie. both leisure and convention)

## TARGET MARKET SEGMENTS<sup>i</sup>

- Student
- Seniors
- Boomers
- Bank Travelers

## STRATEGIES

Continue to build awareness of Louisville as a compelling group travel destination, and initiate partnerships with top industry associations and media outlets to leverage awareness into leads and site visits. As some group travel has suspended, we will be pivoting to small group travel and affinity markets for short term.

## TACTICAL STRATEGY

### Seasonal Direct Mail

We will produce a quarterly direct mail piece sent to Louisville's top 100 group tour operators focused on seasonal and cultural experiences in the destination. These will have a call to action and analytics component driving clients to engage on social media or through the website.

### Booking Incentives

Incentives are specifically strong in the group tour market. We will work to consolidate incentives to make them more easily digested by our customers. These will be featured in a newly created promotional piece that we be a one stop shop for all offers.

## **COMMUNITY AWARENESS OVERVIEW**

Tourism is the third largest industry in Louisville. Prior to the pandemic it accounted for 60,000 local jobs and \$3.5 Billion economic impact. Since the roll out of a new brand in 2016, Louisville Tourism has worked on increasing awareness of our destination in top feeder markets, but research shows that nearly 40% of Louisville's visitors in 2019 were here to visit friends and family. We must ensure our residents are educated and understand the full benefits of our city in order to influence future travel.

### **AUDIENCE**

Local residents and businesses

### **STRATEGY**

Empower residents and local business owners to become ambassadors and stewards of Louisville's brand, while also supporting the local business community. The pandemic has also made the importance of tourism more locally aware in the devastating effects to local jobs and lost convention business.

### **MESSAGING STRATEGY**

The overall message will be told through a combination of local stories, photos and experiences, as well as integrating powerful accolades where appropriate.

### **TACTICS**

#### **Social Media**

These efforts will be supported by both organic and paid social media, as well as Louisville Tourism's blog to help tell the full stories.

#### **Bourbon City Brief**

The bi-weekly destination update is positioned as a leading news source for tourism related content. For the first time, last year the subscriber base was expanded beyond the hospitality industry to target residents as well. The format was condensed to be more user-friendly and simplify messaging to be relevant to a broader audience. The intent is to equip a larger audience with the tools to help market Louisville as a destination and increase the relevance of the tourism industry's vital role in economic development.

# CONVENTION DEVELOPMENT

## OVERVIEW

The Louisville market continues to react to the effects of lost or rescheduled group business. 2021 will be much like 2020 with group business being postponed to a future year beyond 2021 or the business that does actualized will be smaller and, in some ways, cannibalized by virtual and hybrid meeting formats. Festivals and Special Events will be the last events to return to pre-COVID attendance and impact. National Association and Corporate business will rebound only after internal travel restrictions are lifted and comfort levels increase with market ready vaccines and general travel policies. As we stand 7+ months into the COVID disruption we clearly are seeing some trends developing within certain market segments and events. Group business that requires larger spaces and more hotel rooms remains somewhat paralyzed by the uncertainty of tomorrows requirements and other unknown travel restrictions. As a result, short term conversions (within 18 months of arrival) are trending smaller in size and impact, while groups seeking dates in late 2022 and beyond are larger and represent the traditional citywide, and larger group decisions. Selling activities and strategies will look differently as the Pandemic continues to impact the hosting of group business. GBAC accreditation and the development of a robust and engaging Virtual Site Visit platform have been added to our priority list to help address and support how business decisions are being made moving forward.

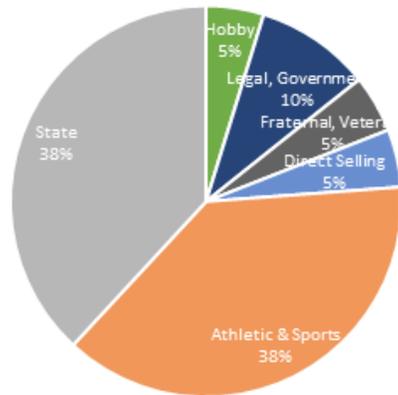
## MARKET SEGMENT PRIORITIES

Through October 2020 we have seen specific group market segments begin to come back and conduct meetings and events. At a much smaller level of attendance but none the less, booking, promoting, and staging events within the current COVID mandated restrictions. Louisville Tourism sees this trend continuing over the next 12-18 months and will prioritize sales and marketing efforts toward these and other market segments. Sports Market, State Association (self-contained) groups, Trade Business Commercial, Direct Sell Organizations are the strongest market segments we see coming back the quickest.

Through October Y-T-D the top feeder markets generating the most tentative opportunities are as follows. Kentucky, Illinois, Virginia, California, District of Columbia, Ohio, Georgia, and Texas. We will continue to concentrate our resources within these feeder markets as we pursue the top market segment highlighted in the above paragraph.

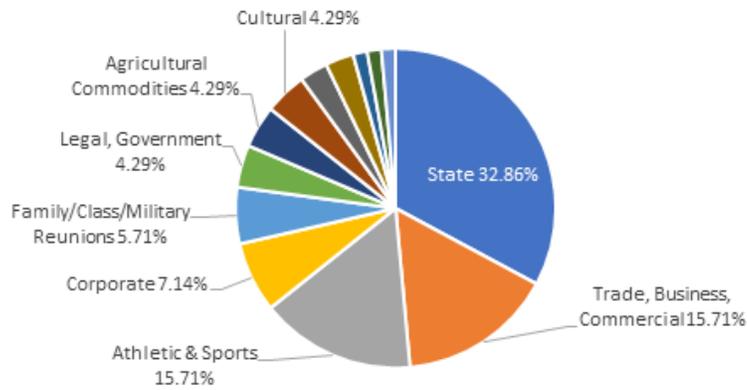
The following charts show future booked business by number of groups, actualized or (hosted) group business and booked business into the future by market segment over the past 4 months, (June-October 2020). These trends tied to bookings and market segments mirror what we see happening nationally. Resources like the recent Afternoon in Louisville, and the Barreling Ahead Hybrid program will continue to target planners from these critically important market segments for our destination.

Actualized Groups by Market Segment

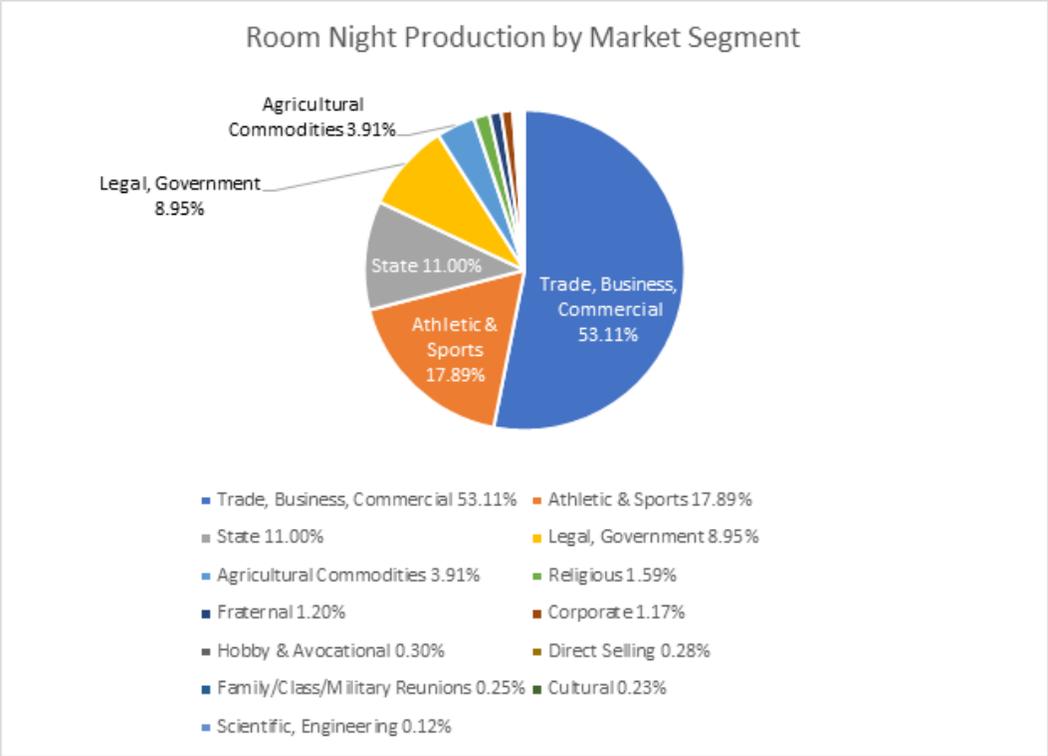


- Trade, Business & Commercial
- Health/Medical
- Legal, Government
- Reunions (Military)
- Direct Selling
- Public Affairs
- Education
- Scientific/Engineering
- Agricultural
- Corporate
- Athletic & Sports
- Social Welfare
- Cultural, Unions
- Hobby
- Fraternal, Veterans
- Religious
- State
- Reunions (Family/Class)

Number of Booked Groups by Market Segment



- State 32.86%
- Athletic & Sports 15.71%
- Family/Class/Military Reunions 5.71%
- Agricultural Commodities 4.29%
- Religious 2.86%
- Hobby & Avocational 1.43%
- Scientific, Engineering 1.43%
- Trade, Business, Commercial 15.71%
- Corporate 7.14%
- Legal, Government 4.29%
- Cultural 4.29%
- Fraternal 2.86%
- Direct Selling 1.43%



**DIRECT SELLING EFFORTS**

Actively qualifying accounts continue to be a staple of our day to day selling efforts. Today it is even more important to be selling to Associations, Corporations, and 3<sup>rd</sup> party organizations from an informed and educated position. Each Louisville Tourism sales manager and administrative assistant qualifies 5 targeted accounts each month with this information being placed into our SimpleView database to direct future selling efforts.

Lead volume through CVENT and other channels are down significantly compared to same time last year, (S-T-L-Y). Aggressively working our SimpleView database armed with accurate group data is just one way we are selling differently as leads, site visits, and future decisions all are under pacing S-T-L-Y levels. We will continue to use targeted direct mail in electronic and traditional formats to promote value date incentives, new development within the destination and other important messages.

**DESTINATION FOCUSED EVENTS**

Staying in front of clients with Virtual and Hybrid sponsored events has been a developing strategy for the Louisville Tourism sales team. ASAE, TEAMS, our internally produced events like an Old Fashion Afternoon in Louisville, and recent Hybrid event, Barreling Ahead, are examples of keeping the spotlight focused on Louisville within meetings and events that are now being conducted virtually or in a Hybrid format. We utilize a sponsorship activation to generate awareness and interest since we cannot travel or participate in person. As we look to the future, we will continue to produce internal events or sponsor an activation within an existing program. These activities take the place of traditional sales trips, missions, and industry tradeshows for the foreseeable future.

# DESTINATION SERVICES

The Destination Services team provides industry-leading support for booked conventions, meetings, sporting events, trade shows and festivals based on the unique needs and specific goals of each group.

Over the past two years as the destination has grown the department has experienced record growth across all service metrics including hosted groups, attendance and economic impact. Entering the second half of the 2019/2020 fiscal year the destination was on a similar trajectory.

Since COVID-19 hit in mid-March the role of Destination Services as a resource for meeting and event planners has become even more pivotal as vacillation among planners and the industry has become the new normal. Moving through the end of the 2019/2020 and into the 2020/2021 fiscal year key projects such as the Hospitality Reopening Task Force, Reopen Every Venue Safely (REVS) cohort and the Build Back Better, Together initiative have played key roles in disseminating information, directing advocacy, and guiding partner networking, all with the goal of reopening the destination safely.

During the first quarter hosted groups and attendance numbers were down 97% from the prior year. However, the destination has been able to safely host over 20 events during this time, including the NSRA Street Rod Nationals which brought in over 7,000 registered vehicles to the Kentucky Exposition Center, multiple state groups, athletic events and meetings which in total represented over 20,000 attendees.

## STRATEGIES

### **Attendance Building in a Virtual World**

Building attendance is about information and authenticity. One of the primary ways of executing this had been through in-person experiences. Now that events have transitioned to either a hybrid or a 100% virtual model we must adapt. Accurate and timely information is more important than ever as meeting planners and travelers try to navigate the ever-changing landscape.

The services team has and will continue to work with internal departments and external partners to provide authentic experiences virtually. This could be through live virtual demos, scripted and themed video content incorporating the audience and more. Maintaining our destinations authenticity will be key when developing this content.

The team will also continue to work closely with state and local officials to provide accurate information and we will do it in a direct and simplistic format. Providing the most direct information and being a resource for both local and national trends will be valued by event organizers and their attendees as policies and guidance continues to change.

### **Forecasting the Future**

We must continue to rely on data in times of uncertainty. Looking for trends will help guide the destination as we move forward. The services team will continue to leverage our relationships and knowledge of definite business to understand and best gauge the impact to future events. Working with the sales team we will communicate regularly with the clients and forecast attendance and room nights through the end of 2021.

A rubric will also be established to help provide a baseline for group impact based on the specific market segment and time of year an event will take place. Trends are already emerging that suggest certain market segments will be able to weather the pandemic differently than others. Tracking sentiment data, attendee surveys, hotel forecasting, actual group pick-up and comp city insights will help establish percentage adjustments to definite business that is not able to provide reliable data on their own. This will act as a baseline that we can adjust as event dates draw closer and more data is available.

### **Bridging Community Partnerships**

The pandemic has allowed Destination Services to continue forward with a community engagement focus and connect with numerous industries locally. We will continue to foster networking and partnership opportunities among our community. The need has never been greater for streamlined communication with public and private entities to ensure the destination is prepared for the myriad of services events require. Key local stakeholders in the hospitality community include restaurants, attractions, hotels, public safety and economic development agencies.

# TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The Tourism Development staff is dedicated to selling Louisville as a leisure travel destination and servicing visitors from across a spectrum of domestic individual leisure traveler and ever evolving tour and travel markets.

## LEISURE INDIVIDUAL MARKET

### OVERVIEW

During a recent Destination Analysts Consumer Travel Sentiment, it was reported that of the consumers surveyed 57.8% felt ready to travel again with over 54% excited to take a getaway trip in the near future. The study also found that consumer aspiration and demand for travel continues to move in a positive direction with consumers adding leisure travel to their spending priorities. When consumers were asked about information sources they would utilize as they plan a trip over the next 12 months, 49% would rely on information from official state tourism offices and 47% would turn to official local tourism offices like Louisville Tourism as trusted sources.

With traveler sentiment positively increasing, the Louisville Tourism Development team has developed leisure travel programs to not only entice travelers to visit Louisville, but to also help mitigate any hesitations consumers may have so that they may enjoy a “safe-cation”.

### STRATEGIES

- Increase focus on the Sustained Leisure Event Email Campaign featuring the weekly Front Runners, to subscribers in the leisure database to motivate, inspire and influence travel to Louisville from both our regional drive market and emerging fly markets.
- Launched the Personalized Travel Planning program to assist travelers with a personalized suggested itinerary based on several components such as type of trip; time of year of trip; and interests collected via an online form. After submitting the online form, the traveler receives attractions and restaurant suggestions; ways to purchase tickets and book a hotel room; and information about Louisville’s Safe Re-opening plan from an industry local and insider.
- Develop bespoke hotel packages to drive overnight stays that include attractions tickets and/or a themed welcome bag. A few examples of these themed hotel packages are the “Mint” to Be Stay & Play Package, #BourbonCity Package, and Top Chef Louisville Culinary Package. Buildouts are based on the themed monthly editorial calendar created by the Louisville Tourism Marketing team to drive synergy in efforts between leisure sales, advertising, public relations and social media strategy.

## BOURBON CITY’S BLACK HERITAGE LEISURE OUTREACH

### OVERVIEW

The Tourism Development team was challenged over a year ago to develop an initiative to grow African American leisure visitation to Louisville beyond its current total of 11%. Little did we know at the time we began our work that less than one year later, we would find our city at the epicenter of a moral reckoning around racial equity and social justice which makes our work in this space more urgent and relevant than ever before. We are beyond blessed to serve a destination that has a native son in Muhammad Ali who is

recognized globally for his impact and an iconic visitor experience already operating in the Ali Center. In an effort to be intentional about how we facilitate product development going forward, we are recognizing that true inclusion also requires a focus on history that has not been told often enough, in our museums, education and cultural institutions. Our work in this space is guided by the principals that all travelers to Louisville truly benefit when the fullest stories about our destination are told and that developing a more inclusive travel experience requires no sacrifice at all, it is the right thing to do and has a business case with purchasing power behind it. The economic value of African American travelers increased in 2018 to \$63 billion from \$48 billion in 2010 according to Mandala Research. The availability of immersive visitor experiences telling a multiculturally diverse and inclusive story of the past and future is increasingly being sought out.

## KEY STRATEGIES

- Develop and launch the Unfiltered Truth Collection, a series of new and immersive experiences at local attractions, around what is currently underrepresented key pieces of Louisville's Black Heritage story told in a straight and unfiltered way.
- Work with Louisville Tourism Black Tourism Advisory Council to develop programming and build a destination product inventory around a more diverse Louisville experience.
- Partner with local attractions, businesses and organizations in the curation of hospitality experiences focused on Louisville's Black history and heritage story.
- Host the African American Travel Conference in April 2021 to drive awareness of Louisville's diverse and inclusive cultural tourism experiences.
- Identify potential likeminded organizations and associations locally, regionally, nationally to partner with to endorse and represent Louisville Tourism and the Black Heritage experience found in our destination
- Explore the most effective ways to reach the Black traveling audience with our grass roots sales efforts, specifically in our regional drive markets, to ensure that Louisville is part of the consideration set for all travelers who are seeking more diverse traveling experiences.

## LEISURE GROUP TOUR/MOTORCOACH MARKET

### OVERVIEW

Tour operators occupy a vital role in the travel industry and allow travelers to let someone else get on with the business of organizing accommodations, meals, sightseeing and transportation, while they get on with the pleasure of traveling. Travel packages allow for a customized travel experience based on a visitor's budget or preference.

Group travel is a huge business. The 55 members of the U.S. Tour Operators Association generated \$19 billion in business, serving nearly 10 million consumers, according to its 2018 statistics. "Like most things in travel, nothing is truly exactly as it has been before," said Steve Born, chief marketing officer for the Globus family of brands, whose umbrella covers well-known tour companies Globus and Cosmos as well as Monograms and Avalon Waterways.

The need for safety mixed with anxiety about being away from home is nothing new, but the intensity of this crisis has fundamentally changed some of the familiar equations of group travel. Group travel will be focused heavily on domestic travel this year and possibly beyond and closer-to-home destinations have an extra appeal. Motorcoaches will still be touring but the group size will be smaller to ensure social distancing, and, in many cases, there will be two or three buses instead of one or two.

## Key Strategies

- Partner with existing group tour customers with large scale reach, external marketing, sales prowess and strong existing client bases on more effectively marketing Louisville tours.
- Leverage new leads and convert destination awareness created by hosting African American Travel Conference and Boomers in Groups into booked business both short and long term.
- Encourage all clients (past, present and future) to take make a site visit to Louisville either via Louisville Tourism's new virtual platform or in person to showcase first-hand how Louisville is actively preparing to keep guests safe and healthy while being open for business.
- Continue to focus on booking incentives that allow groups to be rewarded for their overnight stays in Louisville based on reduced minimums to accommodate smaller groups with programs like 10 Rooms to Love, the Ark Encounter 2x2, as well as our 2-hour step on guided tours.

## VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER OVERVIEW

Despite the uncertainty of this year the Louisville Visitor Center remains committed to offering unparalleled customer service to visitors, locals and the tourism industry itself through efforts to be the central repository for the most up to date information on Louisville's hospitality offerings. The VIC staff is constantly curating the most current operating days and hours for attractions, restaurants and special events. Meanwhile, Louisville Tourism travel counselors at the Visitor Center endeavor to understand each visitor's needs and planning preferences by using an omni channel approach. Guests are offered itinerary planning assistance, personal stories from a local's perspective, and provided all necessary logistical information to help make the most of their time in Louisville through print, web and touchless mobile content.

## STRATEGIES

- Continue to operate the Louisville Visitor Center with the safety and health of our staff and guests as our top priority through the implementation of restricted guest capacity, directional signage, no touch customer service options like the use of QR codes for ticket purchases and information sharing, information grab and go bags, limited retail merchandise, curbside information service and more.
- Relaunch free "Whiskey Walking Tours" from the Visitor Center based on customer demand to complete the "Looking at Louisville" public Walking Tour Series roll out.
- Reengage 450+ local ambassadors, challenging them to post photos on their social media channels visiting attractions, restaurants, shops, and other points of interest in Louisville while using the #LouisvilleLove or @GoToLouisville handle.

## CERTIFIED TOURISM AMBASSADOR PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Louisville's renowned Southern hospitality is one of the reasons visitors return to the city again and again – visitors that generate \$3.5 Billion in tourism revenue each year. Those are dollars that support local services, economic development, recreation, the arts and entertainment for those that live here and save each Jefferson County family \$1167 in taxes. A positive visitor experience is critical to increase the number of visitors to our city, how much they spend and, most importantly, their desire to come back. The Louisville Certified Tourism Ambassador Program was developed to foster a destination-wide culture of quality service and welcoming citizens, in partnership with So IN Tourism.

New this year to CTA is the launch of the web-based classes to take the place of in-person gatherings during the pandemic. Anyone can participate, not just those 27,000-local people employed in the hospitality industry. In fact, it's a great way to get to know the city you call home. The Louisville program uses guidelines from the nationally recognized Certified Tourism Ambassador™ Network, with the goal of encouraging repeat business, increasing new visitors and boosting visitor spending. Louisville currently has over 1200 CTA's representing all sectors of the travel and tourism industry.

### **Key Strategies**

- Launch New Web-Based Accreditation Courses.
  - Continue retention and engagement program for CTA's through virtual events, insider experiences and incentives to local attractions.
  - Continue to partner with JCPS hospitality academies program by offering an annual CTA scholarship to 100 Jefferson County High School students creating an industry specific talent pipeline for future workforce development.
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