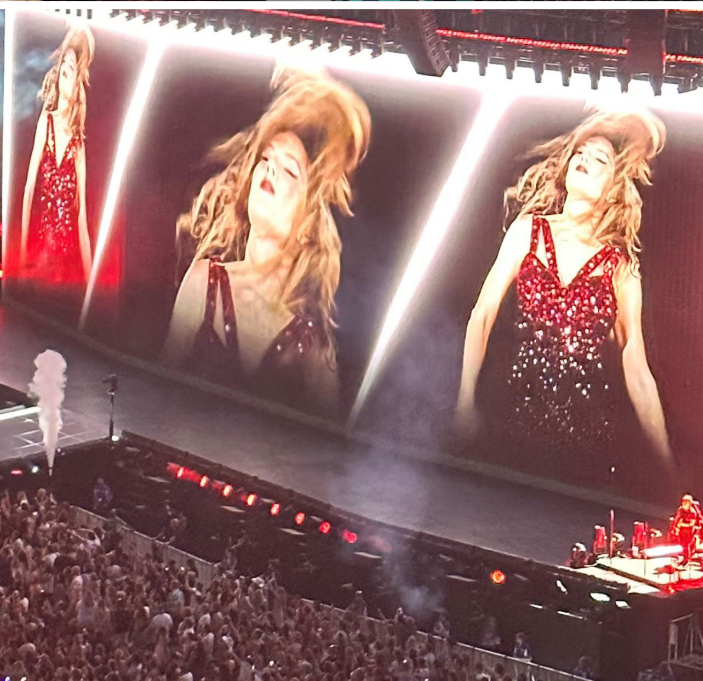
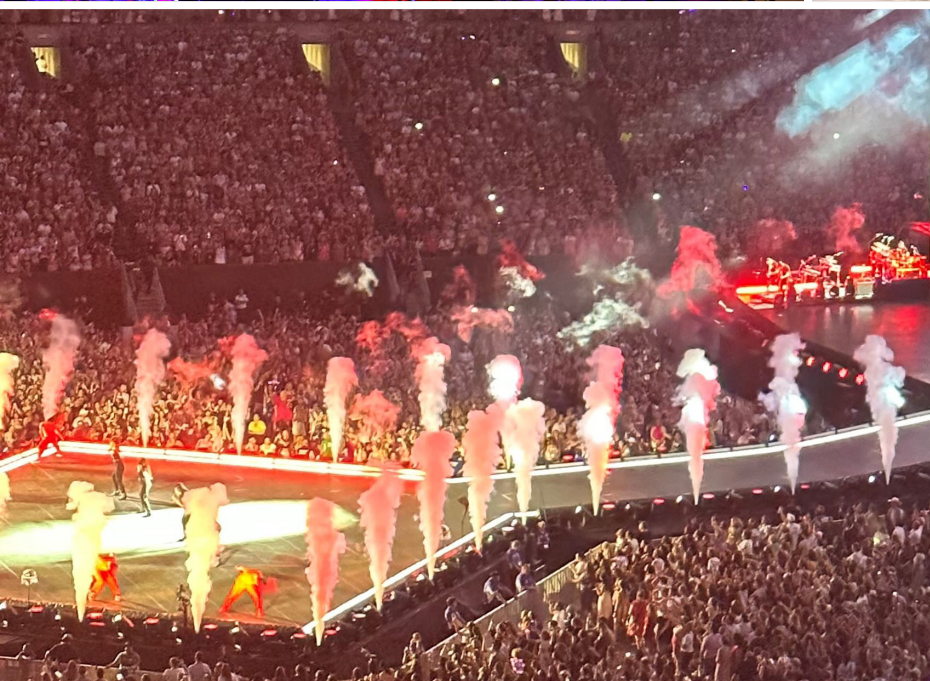


2024

# BUSINESS & MARKETING PLAN





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2023 saw the start to stabilization in the tourism industry following the long pandemic downturn. Tourism volume into the region is approaching 2019 levels, but is still behind in overall demand. However, RevPAR has exceeded the best year in the destination by 12%. Business travel, overall convention demand, and international visitation are still in a period of recovery and have not reached 2019 levels. We continued to see strong recovery at CVG International Airport including the resumption of international flights to Toronto and Paris and the epic launch of new British Airways London service to Heathrow. The highlight of 2023 was the unexpected lift in visitation by the Cincinnati Reds as well as FC Cincinnati and the impact of the Taylor Swift two-night event in the region.

The Cincy Region partnership continues to prove as a strong and successful model for promoting our unique destination. We have fully integrated the convention, group sales and international sales segments under a “one destination, many options” mentality. We are preparing a major content alignment in the regional website and are moving into position to only fund one marketing plan to drive visitor demand. This is an additional efficiency that positions the organization to generate better visibility for NKY tourism opportunities and eliminate an additional point of duplication.

The organization received a tremendous influx of funds in 2023 from the Kentucky legislature’s appropriation of \$75M to tourism organizations. meetNKY received \$4.5M for overall destination marketing and we utilized half of those funds

in 2023 to promote NKY experiences in new markets and sponsored new events in outer markets to drive traffic to the destination website and stimulate new visitor interest. We also received \$5M in ARPA funding to restore convention demand at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center. We will be spending that through 2026 to secure new economic impact groups at the center and restore convention demand to pre-COVID levels. Finally, we have received several hundred thousands of funding for two multi-jurisdictional programs from the last tranche of ARPA funding to build a Kentucky Faith Trail with seven destination partners from the state and to host a special Bourbon & Belonging Week in October of next year.

Economic impact from tourism has reached close to \$2 billion in 2023 and continues to be the

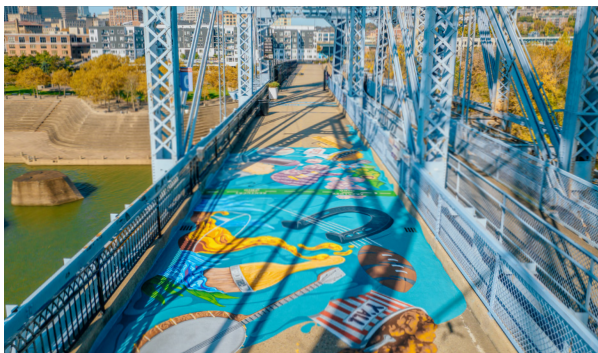
## Hotel Results in Northern Kentucky and 2024 Hotel Forecast

	Occupancy	Average Daily Rate	Revenue Per Available Room
2024	71.6%	\$124.12	\$88.82
2023	70.9%	\$122.33	\$86.77
2022	67.5%	\$114.91	\$77.54
2021	64.5%	\$101.69	\$65.63
2019	73%	\$106.14	\$77.48

second largest tourism economy in the state. All tourism attractions are reporting that 2023 was a strong year for demand and do not anticipate a large downturn. Combined with strong demand from CVG International Airport, a robust event schedule for 2024, and a good convention pace at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center, we do not anticipate a major disruption in 2024 if the travel economy softens or potential travel impacts from a 2024 election season.



Throughout 2023, the meetNKY team has been working to address items identified in the 2022 NKY Tourism Master Plan. We have made good progress on the primary backbone of riverfront wayfinding along Riverfront Commons with Southbank Partners as well as along Madison Avenue with the City of Covington and the Covington Business Council. We have begun bridge placemaking as we unveiled a new “Where We Connect” mural at the state line on the Purple People Bridge, unveiled an alien sculpture in Covington and will finish a new mural under the Roebling Bridge in 2023 that will assist in navigating the connection between Covington and Newport for hotel visitors. We are beginning a public art plan in conjunction with the City of Newport that will activate in 2024 as well as planning a major art activation on the west wall of the Northern Kentucky Convention Center. We have fully activated all the river cities in the Ohio River Way partnership as we work to develop additional outdoor opportunities along the riverfront. Our new Product Development Director has been very active at the city, county, and state level on development needs. Finally, as the year ends, we have released an updated study on the future of the Northern Kentucky Convention Center as well as clarifying the needs for a state-of-the-industry amateur sports facility. That will become a big focus of the board in 2024 as we plan forward to ensure demand stays strong in Northern Kentucky and the Cincy Region.





# THE 2024 PLAN

We are anticipating a 10.2% increase in revenues in 2024 and will also see a 3.4% increase in supply as the Homewood Suites in Newport and the Candlewood Suites in Erlanger open in early 2024.

While all indicators are that the economy may be slowing down, we have chosen to follow CoSTAR methodology and research that this region is insulated from a downturn in 2024. Demand should continue to pace as recovery continues in the midweek business, international and meetings segment. Next year's event calendar is strong for the region in 2024 with many demand concert dates including Kenny Chesney, Luke Combs, Foo Fighters and Green Day as well as BLINK returning in October 2024. We will shift our regional marketing focus to incremental demand needs in the shoulder season to grow occupancy throughout the year.

We will begin the alignment of Northern Kentucky content and offerings into the regional website to prepare for a merger of the leisure media plan in 2025. We will utilize the remaining ARPA DMO funds to support the content alignment as well as run two region wide Expedia campaigns to drive incremental hotel demand in the Q1 and Q4 shoulder season.

We will continue to leverage the special convention ARPA funds in 2024 to bring new business to the Northern Kentucky Convention Center as we start a major marketing campaign on what it means to meet in NKY. The funds are also allowed to be used as incentives for new business and we are leveraging those for 2024-2026 business. As the Duke Energy Convention Center closes mid-year 2024, we will partner with Visit Cincy on relocation needs and working in the marketplace to sell

meeting in the Cincy Region with our combined trade show footprint that has been successful.

Leisure sales will be a focus on 2024 via our partnership with Visit Cincy in the Regional Tourism Alliance as we have a salesperson in each organization focused on the domestic leisure group market for tours as well as developing student focused tour opportunities and working at three consumer leisure shows in 2024. We will continue our focus on the international market and add a most robust tracking module to gauge the impact of the direct Paris flight at CVG and the second year of the British Airways flight to London. We will work directly with CVG International Airport on new opportunities to open new markets both domestically and internationally. One of the great successes in 2023 was the amount of international media coverage of the region and

we are working with the Commonwealth of Kentucky Tourism department to continue to storytelling for this unique gateway to the South.

As the organization has taken a more visible role in destination development because of implementation of the 2022 Tourism Master Plan, we will continue targeted investments in public art via a partnership with a regional arts organization as well as targeted investments in outdoor development at AJ Jolly Park as well as potential investment in regional bike trail development. We will also work together with the NKY Chamber and BE NKY Growth Partnership on completing a NKY narrative that will define the attributes that Northern Kentucky owns as part of The Cincy Region and how we express those attributes in marketing.



## CONVENTION SALES & EVENTS

### Lead Generation to Partners

We will continue a strong process of working on an acquisition strategy to bring new conventions and events to Northern Kentucky. We have started a major meetings-based marketing campaign with Media One, RCMA and MPI focused on new business development. The convention/events team has grown to 5 FTEs vs the 9 FTEs pre-COVID. We plan on the addition of a new engagement manager and sales/service coordinator in 2024 and will work forward with 7 FTEs until demand from an enhanced convention center or sports facility requires the addition of staffing. The convention sales team will showcase Northern Kentucky event offerings and seek new business opportunities at a variety of trade shows in 2024 with our Visit Cincy partners as part of the Cincy Region collaboration. We are setting a goal to increase lead volume by 30% in 2024.

### Convention/Event Business Development

Continuing the leverage of the Kentucky ARPA funds for events, we will focus on new convention/event development for Northern Kentucky through 2026 including hosting a new youth golf tournament in Boone County in May 2024. We will utilize \$147k of ARPA funding on business with a \$2.2M economic impact at the convention center in 2024 and overall

convention room night execution at the center should be on par with 2023.

### Event Execution

The event team will continue to provide best in class service to planners in the region, leverage the kiosks in all regional hotels and the regional visitors guide to support attendee engagement and begin to host monthly partner events to improve the service excellence and development of the hospitality industry also a focus of the 2022 Tourism Master Plan. We will also host the Kentucky Tourism Industry for a major convention in November 2024.



# LEISURE SALES - DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL

## Domestic Leisure Sales

We will move all domestic leisure activities into the Cincy Region alliance as we plan to attend many shows this year to promote the region including American Bus Association, STS Domestic Showcase, Heartland Travel Showcase, National Tour Association, Student and Youth Travel Association, and others as detailed in our full trade show plan. We will continue to build new products for this market, especially in the student travel market with increasing STEM offerings and increasing demand from the Black Tour and Travel market. We validate ROI in this market via the group tour tracking process and will work to show at least 8% growth in this market. This year, the leisure sales team will also showcase the region at three consumer travel shows in Indianapolis, Atlanta, and Columbus with a goal to increase our leisure email database to improve the marketing efforts of a getaway to the region.



## International Sales

We are looking forward to the second year of new British Airways service to CVG International Airport and the return of daily service to Paris via Delta. We will continue our Cincy Region partnership in selling this unique collision of North and South via in market British representation and explore improving pass through volumes from France and the U.K. from the German speaking market with in market German representation. We have decided to move the Canadian market to the domestic marketing plan for the Cincy Region and have ceased representation there. The Commonwealth of Kentucky continues to also have a strong international focus and we will partner with the Kentucky

Department of Tourism on several outbound sales opportunities including a March sales mission to Paris and London, in bound FAMs, and attending Travel South, IPW and Brand USA week. We will add new Visa Destination research to track inbound traveler spends in the market to verify growth in the international segment. We will continue partnerships with CVG International Airport on new markets for growth in the coming years.



# MARKETING AND BRANDING EFFORTS



## Domestic Leisure Media/Marketing

We will continue the impactful partnership with Visit Cincy and focus much effort in 2024 aligning the content strategy on visitcincy.com to showcase NKY attributes as part of the Cincy Region visit. We will run a dedicated leisure marketing plan driving traffic to the site with a major focus in Q1 and Q4 to provide incremental lift in the shoulder/low demand seasons. In addition, we will work on a collaborative storytelling model using a national PR agency to tell the Cincy Region story nationally with a focus on West Coast outlets. We will focus the content strategy to leverage this earned media as well as social media to provide focus on high season attributes such as the busy concert schedule, sports team demand, arts focused events like Moving Chains and BLINK as well as a more diverse stories leveraging the Cincinnati Music Festival, the Black Music Walk of Fame, and the Black Family Reunion.



## Niche Marketing Plans

We will continue the bourbon centric media plan to drive traffic to The B-Line.com as well as our partnership with Come Find Bourbon and work to improve the engagement rate on the B-Line site as a scorecard metric. After pushing the Kentucky Faith Trail website live at the end of 2023 via a multijurisdictional ARPA grant, we will utilize additional multijurisdictional grants to create two video series entitled “Distilled in Kentucky,” narrated by Silas House and focusing on regional music, as well as a video series hosted by Central Kentucky chef/entrepreneur Ouita Michels. Finally at the end of 2024 we will celebrate Bourbon & Belonging, a week dedicated to LGBTQ travel and bourbon with five other destinations in Kentucky.



## Local events/local impact and regional narrative

We will continue to host the March John G. Carlisle Bottled In Bond Competition & Celebration™ event as well as the July Paradise Music Festival, September Covington Oktoberfest and December Dark Charge Day and will run full Zartico reports on all of these in year 3 to evaluate if they are becoming inbound travel generators for the region. We will continue our support for the county LIFT grants to support additional local events that also are an impact for resident’s quality of life. Our partnerships with local media outlets and our local PR company, Scooter Media assist us in telling tourism’s story to the residents of NKY. We will finalize a new regional narrative in 2024 with our partners at the Northern Kentucky Chamber, BE NKY Growth Partnership and OneNKY Alliance.

# DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

We made nice impact in 2023 as we began to act on the Tourism Master Plan and the new Product Development Director established his role in implementing the plan. We have finalized and released directional studies on the future of the Convention Center as well as a needs assessment for an amateur sports facility. 2024 will bring new direction and intention on these projects.

### Public Art, Wayfinding, Outdoor Development

We will continue to invest in destination attraction projects that become either linkages between parts of our destination like the Purple People Bridge mural or become iconic for the region like the planned Convention Center Mural. We are exploring a partnership with a major regional arts organization to leverage our funding with other regional sources for a larger impact. We will install new wayfinding to assist the visitor in navigating the destination in 2024 along Madison Avenue in Covington

and begin discussions with the City of Newport on Monmouth Avenue. As all cities take a more intentional approach to public realm strategies for walking, biking and hiking in the region, our Product Development Director will look for incremental areas where the organization can make an impact such as Riverfront Commons, the Erlanger bike trails or Devou Park. As the organization collected camp ground revenues for the first time in 2023, we will invest those collected funds back into AJ Jolly park, funding new kayak rental sites that we can also promote as an outdoor activity.

### Destination Advocacy

We will continue our partnership with the Kentucky Tourism Industry Association to be an advocate for the industry especially with the need to keep a focus on talent development for the industry as well as ensuring we protect tourism funds for tourism development.



A photograph of two people wearing helmets and cycling gear, standing in a forest with trees and a path. The scene is bathed in a warm, orange light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The text 'ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH' is overlaid in large white letters.

# ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH

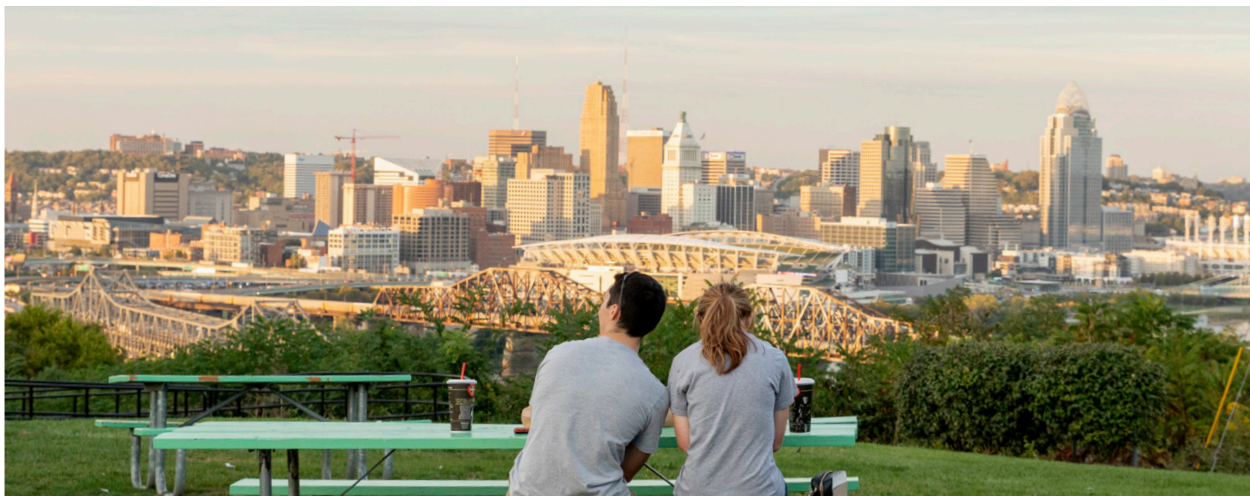
The meetNKY organization is focused ensuring we continue to be a good steward of visitor generated tax dollars as well as a good fiduciary for the American Recovery Plan Act Fund allocated via the 2022 State Budget.

To ensure complete transparency and accountability, we will continue to utilize MCM & Associates as our third-party accounting firm to ensure financial reporting is compliant with the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). We will continue the monthly Finance Committee meetings and ensure we are generating a return on investment for funds leveraged for promotion, sales, and marketing. We will conduct a full financial audit on the bedtax receipts as well as the utilization of ARPA funding and receive no material filings.

Operations continues to look for efficiencies for the streamlined collections process and will finalize the direction on the creation of an online payment portal for partners.

In 2023, meetNKY partnered with a new investment firm, Redtree, to invest the development fund in high yield investments. We intend to continue this into 2024 as we prepare for the utilization of these funds in the near future.

The organization continues to operate in a lean and nimble manner however we will add final roles in convention/event sales 2 to continue to support the organization's growth. We will limit salaries/benefits to 23% of projected revenues and cap operating expenses at less than 7% of revenue ensuring we are always putting 70% of revenues into return-on-investment programs.



# TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK: 9.11 EXHIBIT



# 2024 DESTINATION SCORECARD



**3%**

increase of kiosk usage  
in partner organizations

**10%**

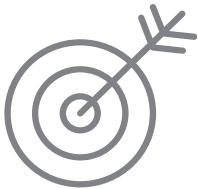
growth in Cincy Region  
consumer email database

**5%**

increase in B-Line  
engaged sessions

**3%**

increase in Visit Cincy  
engaged sessions



**94%**

top box Meeting Planner  
satisfaction score

**+100%**

Cincy Region  
RevPAR

**+115%**

NKY region  
RevPAR

**8%**

increase in Cincy  
Region Group Tour  
regional room nights

Opex no more than

**7%**

of operating revenues



Salaries no more than **23%** of operating revenues

**10%**

increase in definite economic impact  
of conventions booked for future years

**30%**

increase Convention Lead Volume Year Over Year

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## MEETNKY STAFF



**Julie Kirkpatrick, CTA, CDME**

President & CEO



**Mary Watkins, CTA**

Director,  
Bureau Operations



**Josh Quinn**

Director,  
Product Development



**Amanda Johannemann**

Director,  
Destination Marketing  
& Communications



**Dot Crane, CTA**

Director,  
Content & Research



**Maija Zummo**

Destination  
Communications Manager



**Amanda Lewis**

Website & Content  
Manager



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Convention Sales



**Christy Staten, CTA**

Convention  
Sales Executive



**Karen Fletcher**

Business Development  
Manager



**Lorey Hall**

Leisure Sales Manager



**Cassie Hurst, CTA**

Tourism  
Information Coordinator

# MEETNKY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Chair

**Subhas Patel**

Treasurer

**David Delbello**

**Bimal Patel**

**Brian Fry**

**Sandy Ritter**

## COMMISSIONERS AT LARGE

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**William I. Donnermeyer**

**Matt Duda**

**Rep. Stephanie Dietz**

**Ken Lewis**

**Jim Lokesak**

**Mark Looy**

**Emily Palmer Wolf**

**Sal Santoro**

**Sen. John Schickel**

**Shannon Smith**



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