

2023

*SoIN Tourism*

# Sales & Marketing Plan

*The "SMarketing" Plan*

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# Introduction

As 2022 ends, the tourism industry continues to recover from the pandemic. Leisure weekend travel has led the way, and events came back strong in 2022. Bookings for business travelers, motorcoach group leisure tours, and in-person meetings and conferences, but they are gaining steam. We expect positive trends to continue.

As we plan for 2023, SoIN Tourism will stay nimble and watch for any COVID challenges that may arise. The U.S. unemployment rate is at pre-pandemic levels. Inflation and labor shortages; however, continue to challenge both travelers and businesses. We will support our industry partners and bring value to the community by driving visitors to the area, introducing them to our charming downtowns and small towns and inspiring them to stay. SoIN Tourism will continue to partner with community organizations and businesses, finding beneficial programs to elevate our area and draw more visitors.

This 2023 Sales and Marketing Plan outlines the programs we will use to drive visitation to the communities of Clark and Floyd counties.





# The SoIN Brand Story

A destination brand is not a slogan or an ad campaign. It is the sum of the history, character and culture of the people within the destination. Visitor experiences in SoIN reflect the area's communities and their people. We are:

- Open & Unpretentious
- Bustling, yet Friendly
- Down-to-earth
- Neighborly & Easy Going
- Low Hassle
- Good Value, Affordable



SWEET  
SPOT



*We're in the Sweet Spot  
between City and Country.*

Our Messaging is Organized Around

## SoIN's Brand Pillars

Brand pillars are characteristics that make our area distinctive, unique and attractive. We lead with these attributes to tell the SoIN story. Through research and visitors reactions to our destination marketing, we find that visitors value these pillars.

### Arts & Culture



Immersive arts experiences

Maker culture

Storyed performing arts

### History & Heritage



Lewis & Clark and the Corps of Discovery

Steamboat history

African American History  
*the Underground Railroad & the Network to Freedom*

### Culinary



Eclectic, entrepreneurial restaurant scene

Craft beer, wine and spirits

### Outdoor Recreation



Rolling hills, atypical Midwest topography

Farm experiences

Knobstone Trail,  
*the Midwest's Appalachian trail*

### Riverside



Ohio River scenery

Riverside dining and recreation

390 million year old fossils

River history

# Guiding Principles

## Destination Marketing Benefits SoIN

Destination Marketing is a vital community function. It attracts visitors who inject money into the local economy and enhances our quality of place. SoIN Tourism performs a public good benefiting local people in Clark and Floyd.

## Vital Partnerships

Our tourism partners deliver experiences to visitors, and we can't market without them. We create opportunities to collaborate with partners; we share their stories. We are open to mutually beneficial partnerships with businesses who wish to enhance the local visitor experience.

## Marketing through Storytelling

We use video, photographic and written storytelling to make authentic connections with consumers. We include diverse voices to represent our community accurately and to convey that all are welcome.

## Regionalism Benefits All

The SoIN visitor industry maintains a symbiotic relationship with Louisville's. Our ability to attract visitors relies on our proximity to Louisville, and Louisville tourism benefits from our offerings.

## Website as a Hub

Our website, GoSoIN.com, serves as our front doorstep, inviting visitors to explore SoIN's offerings and plan a stay. It is the hub of our communities.

## Emerging from COVID-19

The pandemic taught us to be even more flexible and creative. As virus levels fluctuate, SoIN Tourism will assess market forces and react accordingly. We will not compromise the health and safety of tourism employees, residents and visitors. We will communicate COVID safety protocols as we follow federal, state and local health guidelines.

# Tourism's Economic Impact\*



Total local workers\*\*  
supported by tourism:

**4,751**

\*\*Full or part-time jobs



**11 Cents**

of each visitor dollar went toward the  
payment of state and local taxes.



If tourism did not exist, each of the  
**85,600** families in Clark-Floyd  
would have to pay an additional **\$432**  
per year in taxes to maintain current levels  
of state & local government services.



**55 Cents**

of every dollar spent by visitors to Clark-Floyd  
counties is returned to the local area.

\*Source: Rockport Analytics, LLC, 2020



## SWOT Analysis

In preparing the 2023 Sales and Marketing Plan, SoIN Tourism conducted a SWOT analysis. Below are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats we expect the tourism industry to face.

### Strengths

- Marketing campaigns expanding beyond established audiences
- As a data-driven, accountable, transparent organization, SoIN Tourism engages with the community and shares its plans and reports
- SoIN Tourism is a visible presence in the community
- SoIN Tourism staff's relationships, networking and history; community's improved perception of the SoIN team
- Increased Board engagement
- Leading attraction partners/innovative

### Weaknesses

- More people know about SoIN, but it is not yet a household name
- Business and group travel continues to lag
- Staff capacity is improving, but staff members still wear many hats
- Visitor Center location is still a challenge with the closure of Exit 0 on I-65 South
- Turnover of travel counselors
- Limited capacity meetings and sports facilities lead to lost business

### Opportunities

- Capitalize on READI Initiative projects
- Encourage partners to use SoIN Tourism's marketing expertise and resources.
- Enhance education and awareness of tourism's contribution to the local economy.
- Encourage collaboration between area tourism and hospitality partners
- Provide SoIN Tourism board members with tools to act as ambassadors
- Expand prospects as SoIN developments expand (Clarksville South, READI initiatives, other communities)
- Engage residents and visitors with SoIN Tourism's Mobile Visitor Center
- Elevate, promote current and future outdoor recreation assets (e.g., Origin Park, Ohio River Greenway, South Monon Freedom Trail, etc.)
- Increase tourism funding with 2023 passage of Tourism Improvement District legislation
- Move forward with conference center development after study is complete.

### Threats

- Continuing workforce and labor shortages
- Hoosier humility and authenticity conflict with some residents' push-back against change; balance humility vs pride of place
- Competition among SoIN's communities and perception of favoritism
- Fragmented media
- Political landscape (i.e., bills): RFRA, Dobbs
- Large growth of chain restaurants and shops creates perception of Anywhere, USA; tourism thrives on uniqueness and "only here" messaging
- Potential for resurgence of COVID variants
- Lack of partner engagement
- Lack of perceived diversity in the destination
- Politics of choosing the Conference Center location

## SoIN Visitor Data

### Target Markets

**We target**

Regional Visitors (drive market)

Louisville & Southern Indiana residents who are involved in clubs, associations and sport leagues

Louisville & Southern Indiana residents

Motorcoach tour operators

Event owners, rights-holders and organizers

**because they**

are more likely to stay overnight and spend more.

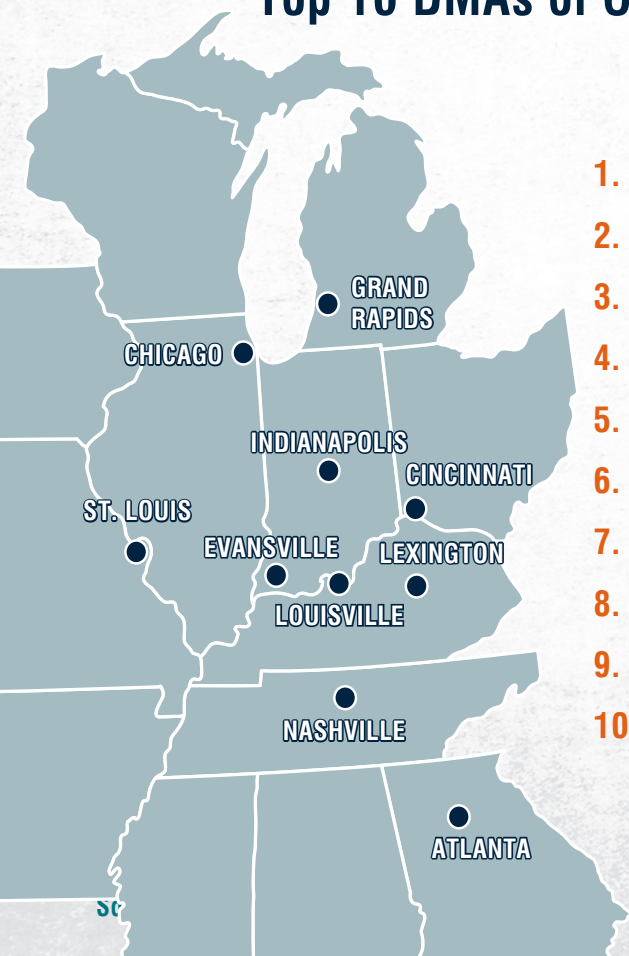
are our best way to reach meeting, event and tournament planners.

they support local businesses and are "brand ambassadors" who influence visiting friends and relatives to engage with our partners.

deliver busloads of visitors.

deliver individuals, couples, and groups on weekends.

### Top 10 DMAs of Origin\*



1. Indianapolis, IN
2. Chicago, IL
3. Evansville, IN
4. Lexington, KY
5. Nashville, TN
6. Cincinnati, OH
7. Louisville, KY
8. Atlanta, GA
9. St. Louis, MO
10. Grand Rapids, MI

### Visitor Information



#### Day Trips

Avg. Length of Stay    Avg. Numbers of Trips  
**5.4 hours    1.6 Trips**



#### Overnight Visits

Avg. Length of Stay    Avg. Numbers of Trips  
**57.6 hours    2.1 Trips**

\*Source: Longwoods & Near, 2021



## Personas

To shape messages effectively and influence decision making, it's helpful to think of customers as individuals who have a lifestyle – or travel style – and with needs that our destination can meet.



### Michelle Mom

**The family travel planner, has kids in sports, family recreation**  
*With affordable, kid-friendly activities and great opportunities to get outdoors, SoIN is an ideal place for family fun with easy access to Louisville.*



### Friend Trips - Drew Brew/Gloria Girlfriend

**Girls' trip planner, relaxing getaway, entertainment with friends**  
**Guys' trip planner, active getaway, entertainment with friends**  
*With convenient hotels, a diverse live music scene, a nearby casino, six golf courses and craft breweries, SoIN offers easy getaways with plenty of fun.*



### Couples - Clyde & Connie/Terry & Morgan

**Weekend getaway, one-day excursion, evening out**  
*Always up for something different, Clyde and Connie Couple will find SoIN an unexplored and unexpected source of culture, cuisine and a way to "get away" without going far.*

**Traveling LGBTQ+ couples seek the chance to explore new areas, talk to interesting people, shop for one-of-a-kind items, and discover culinary options to tempt the palate.**  
*SoIN offers walkable downtowns that welcome couples and friends of all stripes with its easygoing, accepting attitude. A wide variety of dining options allow travelers to experience local and regional flavors.*

### Tom/Tess Tour Operator

**Group tour planner, may own buses**  
*SoIN gives Tom and Tess affordable options to build unique tours that can stand alone or complement a Louisville itinerary.*



## Partner Support

**SoIN Tourism doesn't own our destination's attractions, restaurants, or hotels, nor do we operate the festivals held here. Our partners deliver those experiences to people who live in and visit Clark and Floyd counties.**

As a destination marketing organization, we promote visitor experiences our partners offer. We strengthen our community by helping partners reach new audiences and by collaborating to create new opportunities. We share our partners' stories in our marketing and messaging. In turn, we attract visitors to our destination; they can experience SoIN through the businesses that make up our destination.

### Objectives

- 1. Be the go-to marketing resource for tourism businesses who want to increase their knowledge; help partners implement proven techniques into their marketing plans.**
- 2. Engage tourism and hospitality business owners to build strong partnerships with SoIN Tourism along with other local partners to create win-win relationships and further strengthen SoIN.**

### Goals

- 1.** Drive ticket sales, overnight bookings, attraction attendance, and other sales for partners within SoIN by increased cooperative marketing participation.
- 2.** Increased use of software documenting SoIN Tourism's programs that drive customers to their businesses.
- 3.** Grow Team SoIN attendance by 5%.
- 4.** Engage with visitors by having the Mobile Visitor Center present at partners' high-traffic attractions and events.

## Partner Resources and Opportunities



### SoIN Tourism Partnerships

- Upload content to SoIN Tourism's website to share stories to a wider audience
- Dollar for dollar match for cooperative marketing
- Connect partners to journalists who tell destination stories



### Team SoIN Industry Meetings

- Provide networking meetings throughout the year
- Encourage and facilitate partnerships
- Share marketing tips and resources



### SoIN Visitor Guide

- Provide engaging stories through the organization's Visitor Guide



### Group Tour Efforts

- Sell destination at travel trade shows
- Advise partners on product development for groups
- Affordable turnkey group marketing solutions
- Include appropriate partners in familiarization tours and site visits



### Provide Visitor Services and Tell Partners' Stories

- Engage visitors at select events via Mobile Visitor Center
- Spotlight partners at Visitor and Welcome Centers
  - » Locally made products
  - » Provide brochure rack opportunities
  - » Consumer outreach through travel shows



## Leisure Travel

When asked why they visit SoIN, many people say they are visiting family and friends. SoIN Tourism reinforces the SoIN brand to residents, who are our most frequent visitors and customers and are an important connection to visitors. They serve as ambassadors for our destination. Residents share their experiences with family members and friends who visit from other cities. We market our brand through owned, shared, earned and paid platforms, which include our website, email newsletters, social media, advertising, and outreach at local and regional events. We encourage locals and visitors to engage with us in these channels to expand our reach. SoIN Tourism seeks to penetrate other regional markets, encourage out-of-town visitors to visit and experience our destination.

### Objective

**Establish in the minds of potential visitors that Southern Indiana's lodging, attractions, events, dining, and retail are desirable options for a weekend getaway destination by itself or to complement the Louisville visitor experience. Emphasize the destination's unique brand pillars.**

### Goals

1. Increase year over year unique website visitors by 10%
2. Generate and service 10 hosted media visits
3. Engage more than 1,500 visitors with appealing SoIN passport programs
4. Increase email marketing subscribers by 10% while exceeding industry averages for open and click through rates

### Key Strategies

- A. Expand media coverage by targeting journalists from diverse perspectives who generate stories about the SoIN experience as a welcoming, accessible destination.
- B. Using compelling storytelling and integrated marketing campaigns, engage potential visitors, attract them to our website and provide clear calls to action for visiting the destination.
- C. Engage with visitors who are in the destination through creative outreach programs using the Mobile Visitor Center and promotions meant to drive customers to the Visitor Centers we staff (Jeffersonville and Henryville).
- D. Increase marketing to drive markets north and west of New Albany to drive business during Sherman Minton Bridge construction.
- E. Expand digital marketing footprint to a wider audience as budgets permit.
- F. Develop scoring system to measure outcomes generated through media placements.

## Sales and Destination Services

Whether it's by a themed motorcoach tour, an industry meeting, a sports tournament or an event, SoIN Tourism's Sales and Destination Services team strives to help key decision makers choose the area as a destination for group business.

SoIN Tourism's creative product development, packaging, and itinerary building has raised awareness of the SoIN brand among influencers in the group business. The team fosters strong relationships in collaborative projects among regional partners to strengthen offerings in these ever-changing markets. The team generates leads, services clients, offers site visits and hosts potential customers on familiarization tours to motivate people to choose SoIN for their group's destination.

Since SoIN lacks dedicated conference facilities, the area is a good fit for the "SMERF" market (social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal meetings). In addition, events such as Abbey Road on the River work well here.

### Objectives

- 1. Establish SoIN as a must-visit destination for group tours, meetings, events and sports by itself or combined with other surrounding destinations.**
- 2. Achieve greater partner engagement and encourage collaboration among partners throughout the counties.**
- 3. Establish SoIN in the minds of potential customers that our lodging, attraction, dining and retail options offer authentic experiences by themselves or as part of the essential Louisville experience.**
- 4. Develop awareness of regional meeting opportunities among residents involved in business, association, religious, fraternal, or affinity organizations and assist in appropriate bid requests.**

### Goals

- 1.** Connect with 200 Group Tour Planners. (group leaders & tour operators)
- 2.** 200 Day Trips
- 3.** 10 Overnight Motorcoaches
- 4.** Organize, orchestrate, and execute at least 1 familiarization tour for group tour operators.
- 5.** Plan, invite, and execute up to 2 tour operator site visits for stakeholders within the meetings, conventions, or sports markets.
- 6.** Meet with 3 Qualified meeting planners and produce actual leads for development.
- 7.** Service two meetings from beginning to end.

### Key Strategies

- A.** Promote the SoIN brand in marketing efforts within group influencer networks (group tour operators, meetings, and sports).
- B.** Increase the number of partners who participate in the motorcoach market by providing education and one-on-one training.
- C.** Coach partners on building attractive, interactive experiences.
- D.** Complement sales activities with targeted trade publication advertising and personalized digital content.
- E.** Work with local event planners to build their events for growth in room night revenue.
- F.** Work with the Indiana Sports Commission's Team Indiana grant program to help potential sports events offset overall cost.
- G.** Identify other events like Abbey Road on the River that can shine a national spotlight on our area.
- H.** Work with local governments to encourage their participation in hosting events.
- I.** Attend One Southern Indiana events as an ambassador to help secure local meeting leads.



## 2023 Business Development Calendar

Date	Event	Type
TBD	Mobile Visitor Center at Signature Events	Consumer Outreach
Jan. 14	Chicago Travel and Adventure Show	Consumer Outreach
Jan. 20	Pittsburgh AAA Showcase	Consumer Outreach
Jan. 21	Indianapolis AAA Showcase	Consumer Outreach
Feb. 4	ABA Marketplace	Travel Trade
Mar. 10	Heartland Travel Showcase	Travel Trade
Mar. 19	Circle Wisconsin	Travel Trade
Mar. 27	Select Traveler Conference	Travel Trade
Apr. 20	Indiana Media Marketplace	Travel Media Show
June 11	Travel Alliance Partners	Travel Trade
June 20	PRSA Travel & Tourism Conference	Travel Media Show
Summer	Group Tour Sales Mission	Travel Trade
Aug. 17	Indiana Day at the Fair	Consumer Outreach
Aug. 18	Student and Youth Travel Association	Travel Trade
Sept. 1	Great Day Travel Marketplace	Travel Trade
Oct. 1	Ohio AAA Showcase	Consumer Outreach
Fall	Group Tour Sales Mission	Travel Trade
Nov. 1	National Tour Association	Travel Trade
Nov. 1	Ontario Motorcoach Association	Travel Trade

## Key Performance Indicators

### What we are measuring today

<b>Earned Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of placements</li> <li>• Impressions</li> <li>• Sentiment</li> </ul>
<b>Website</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits (sessions)</li> <li>• Unique visitors</li> <li>• New visitors</li> <li>• Average time spent on site</li> <li>• Bounce rate</li> <li>• Referrals to partner websites</li> </ul>
<b>Extranet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event submissions and deletions</li> <li>• Updated listings</li> <li>• Lead pick-ups</li> <li>• Special offer views</li> </ul>
<b>Email Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open rate</li> <li>• Click-through rate</li> <li>• Email newsletters distributed</li> </ul>
<b>Advertising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response to digital ads and campaigns</li> <li>• Email addresses collected</li> <li>• Best media sources based on type, editorial, circulation and leads collected</li> </ul>
<b>Event Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Spending levels while attending events.</li> </ul>
<b>Event Marketing</b> <i>(i.e. Balloon events, consumer shows, local festivals)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email addresses collected</li> <li>• Quality of emails collected</li> <li>• Quality of show/festival/event for email collection</li> <li>• Number of promo code uses to specific events</li> </ul>



## Key Performance Indicators Continued

### What we are measuring today

<b>Social Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total followers</li> <li>• Leads generated</li> <li>• Total sign-ups for giveaways</li> </ul>
<b>Meetings, Events &amp; Conference Sales</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales contacts generated</li> <li>• Actual leads generated</li> <li>• Site inspections hosted</li> <li>• Lost business (estimated room nights)</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting &amp; Conference Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events hosted</li> <li>• Room nights</li> <li>• Total attendance</li> </ul>
<b>Group Travel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour planner contacts generated</li> <li>• Potential number of visitors</li> <li>• Potential economic impact</li> <li>• Actual leads generated</li> <li>• Total overnight coaches reported</li> <li>• Total daytrip coaches reported</li> <li>• Percent of partners reporting to SoIN</li> </ul>
<b>Visitor Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email addresses collected at VC/WC</li> <li>• Visitors serviced</li> <li>• Merchandise sales and ad leads</li> <li>• Partner referrals</li> <li>• Visitor interests</li> <li>• Visitor inquiry location</li> </ul>