



# SoIN Tourism 2020 Destination Recovery Plan

## Introduction and Background

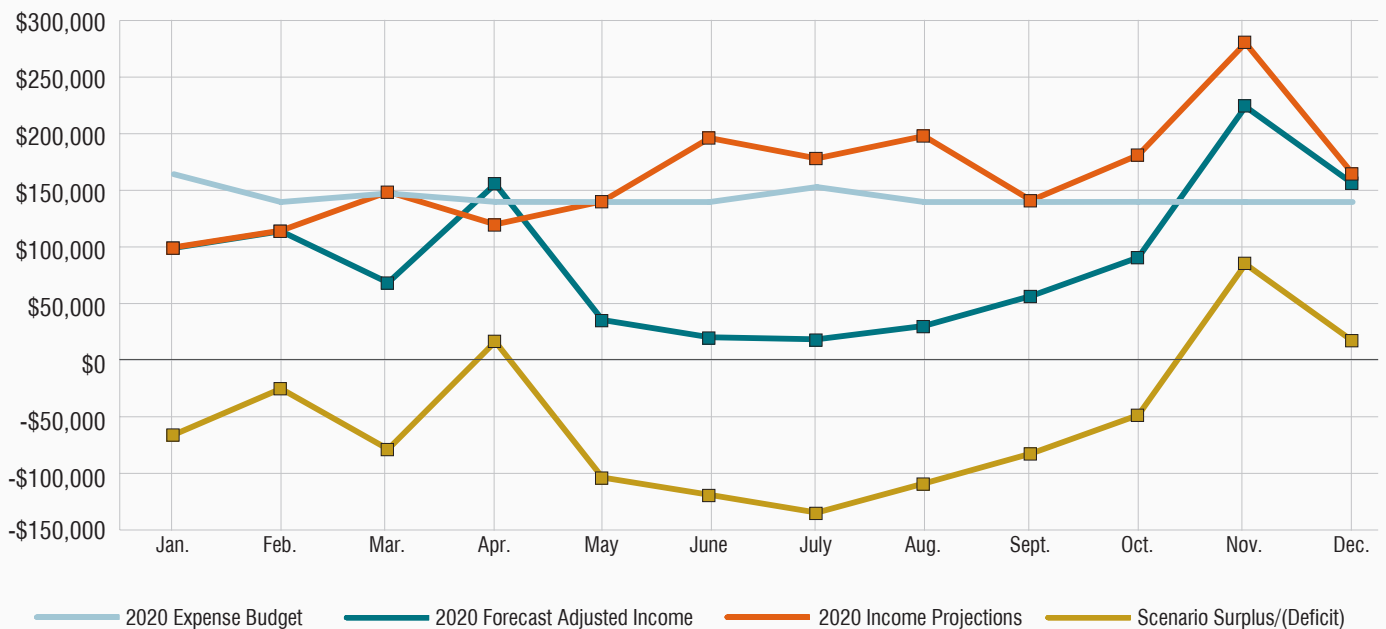
The global pandemic forced most Clark and Floyd county hospitality businesses to close their doors temporarily. Meetings and events were canceled or postponed, and most tourism-related functions came to a halt.

When travel restrictions were imposed, SoIN Tourism also had to close its visitor and welcome centers and make plans for future operations with severely reduced innkeepers tax revenue.

If the Kentucky Derby (scheduled for Sept. 5) and the three Danny Wimmer Presents music festivals (scheduled for the last 3 weekends of September) occur with moderate attendance, SoIN Tourism projects a 46% reduction of budgeted revenues. If those events do not meet expectations, however, the loss will be worse, and we will need to adjust our plans.

**Update:** The three “Trifesta” music festivals produced by Danny Winner Presents did indeed announce their cancellation on April 24. Our fiscal projects will be adjusted accordingly.

Fiscal Projections Covid-19



## Introduction and Background

**We face many unknowns in this pandemic; nevertheless, we must do our best to anticipate what a recovery will look like and use our resources wisely to benefit the community.**

**We will, therefore, approach a recovery period with these strategic goals:**

- **Preserve professional staff who will be needed to:**
  - » Maintain relationships with travel trade, meeting planners, and other stakeholders (our sales staff)
  - » Produce and distribute content to consumers, telling our destination's stories
  - » Communicate and support our partners and stakeholders
- **Maintain our cash reserves**, which will be invested in sales and marketing efforts. Once recovery starts, we want to be positioned to drive an unfair share of visitors to SoIN businesses.
- **Communicate:**
  - » Our plans to tourism partners and stakeholders and coordinate those efforts regionally
  - » Our partners' needs to stakeholders and elected officials.

**The plan will provide a roadmap to SoIN Tourism staff members to focus and lead coordinated efforts, inform board members to help them make decisions, and allocate resources.**

In doing so, this plan will communicate hope and confidence in our business community and elected leaders.

**Our key messages will be:**

- A recovery is possible
- SoIN Tourism is a valuable community partner who can help achieve these results.

**What factors did SoIN Tourism address and what factors do we need to address going forward?**

## Critical Factors Addressed

**SoIN Tourism sees three distinct phases in this recovery process plus a possible contingency phase:**

ADAPT

### React Phase (ended ~ April 10)

When the pandemic was declared and states issued travel advisories, SoIN Tourism focused on maintaining safety of our community and visitors while helping hospitality businesses. We communicated with our audiences about products, services, and experiences still available. By promoting these businesses at a time of great need, we were able to serve both them and our residents who required those services. We stopped all paid media and adjusted the tone of our messaging to reflect the situation. This phase ended around April 10.

PLAN

### Regroup Phase (end date will depend on when restrictions are eased)

In our current phase, our tourism partners continue to operate in limited ways. We have gathered information on how partners changed their businesses to address the situation. We continued to promote tourism partners, writing blogs about carryout and delivery dining, promoting their virtual tours and classes, sales and services. We consulted with industry colleagues, trade association and others to find best practices during the crisis. We developed creative messaging and activities to engage consumers.

We assessed our sales and marketing activities to determine what is appropriate and gathered information from our partners about what they were doing to keep business open. We offered a helping hand, communicated with them about available resources and brainstormed ways they could continue their businesses virtually if possible. Every challenge we faced in this rapid shutdown was a lesson learned. We will use those lessons to prepare us for recovery in the coming weeks and months. Planning is our most important activity in this phase.

COMMUNICATE

### Recovery Phase (starts when restrictions are eased; it continues until vaccinations are widely available and economic uneasiness linger)

Communication is the most critical factor for recovery. As businesses are allowed to reopen, visitors will be free to travel. People will need to be emotionally ready to travel.

- **Residents** will first need to be comfortable with more opportunities to travel freely within the area. Then they will need to be comfortable welcoming visitors to their community.
- When they venture out to experience the joys of travel, **potential visitors** will need to **feel safe about their mode of travel**. They'll need to **feel safe about the destinations** they visit. They'll need to **feel safe about the businesses** they choose to patronize.
- **Businesses and their frontline employees** will require accurate, reliable information so they can meet the needs of both residents and visitors.

**We will communicate frequently with our audiences to assure safety within SoIN.**

### Contingency Phase (occurs if the virus cases increase during recovery)

While nothing can be done to generate travel if restrictions are imposed or if anxiety and economic difficulties continue, we will use what we've learned in this crisis and maximize any opportunities we see if we must plan for the next recovery.

## Destination Marketing and Sales in the Recovery Phase

*The information below is a roadmap SoIN Tourism will use for its recovery.*

SoIN Tourism does not know what will happen, nor how prevalent the coronavirus will be in the future. The goal of our promotions will be to focus on what is within our control and use our resources as wisely as we can.

### Goals and Tactics: Sales

#### Group Tour Market

**Goal:** Recover 2020 canceled bookings for day trips and overnight trips and reschedule to new dates.

**Tactics:**

- Canvas hotels for new opportunities as business plans and budgets have changed. Some hotels that didn't pursue group business in the past may welcome it now.
- Contact tour operators with 2020 bookings; monitor departure changes and assist with re-booking

**Measurements:**

- Book/Re-Book 5 Day Trips to SoIN in 2020
- Book/Re-Book 5 Overnight Trips to SoIN in 2020

#### Sports Market

**Goal:** Search the existing sports events market and book events that are looking for a new home, as demand for facilities is compressed into a shorter calendar.

**Tactics**

- Contact parks departments and local officials in Clark and Floyd counties to organize and unify sports facility use
- Discover a localized niche sports market opportunity within our existing facilities and gauge interest in a local tournament with a regional draw

**Measurements**

- Create one local tournament utilizing facilities across Clark and Floyd Counties
- Book one sports tournament in SoIN from any cancellations in other cities unable to host

#### Meetings Market

**Goals:** Rebook 2020 cancellations and postponements; book new groups that are unable to rebook in original destination.

**Tactics**

- Gather canceled, postponed, or "lost business" reports from all SoIN hotels in the meetings market
- Foster collaboration among a network of SoIN service providers (caterers, DJs, etc.) and hoteliers to provide meeting/event services at discounted rates to offer to meeting planners to restore any lost business or attract new business

**Measurements**

- Collaborate with hoteliers to rebook 50% of SoIN's lost business for 2020 and 2021
- Book one new meeting, convention, or event in 2020

#### Consumer Shows

**Goals:** Attend only verified, high lead producing consumer shows in 2021; cut less profitable shows; partner with other DMOs and organizations like Indiana Foodways Alliance to share booth rental costs.

**Tactics**

- Research past consumer show performances in regard to attendance and lead generation to determine the most effective shows per cost
- Register and attend AAA Travel Shows in Louisville, Indianapolis, and Columbus, OH, and the Nashville Southern Women's Show; cut Chicago and Pittsburgh consumer travel shows

**Measurements**

- Compare lead generation and cost analysis data from the last three consumer show years

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## Goals and Tactics: Marketing Communications

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### Marketing Communications

**Goals:** Increase brand awareness; increase engagement from existing fans on social media; drive traffic to our website; obtain new email newsletter subscribers

#### Tactics

- Create branded website content on our website about our partners and our destinations
  - » Blogs reinforcing our destination's unique experiences, plentiful outdoor recreation, wide open spaces and walkable small town charm
  - » Create digital passport/scavenger hunt/bingo card for visitors to engage with our partners and our website
- Drive people to our site by sharing good news stories about our tourism partners through marketing communications platforms: organic and boosted social media posts; blogs in our email newsletters; news and feature story placements through media relations; and through marketing partnerships
- Create lead ad social media campaigns to obtain new email newsletter signups
- Engage email newsletter subscribers with new, original blog content and website landing pages
- Search engine marketing (Google ad words) within a 50-mile radius; once travel restrictions are lifted, increase to a 100-mile radius and expand when we see an increase in searches and website visits from people in regional drive market cities
- Proactively pitch media outlets with story ideas and, once it is safe, invite interested media contacts to the area to generate positive stories

#### Measurements

- Increase traffic to our website by 20% over recovery phase
  - » Monitor top pages visited to see when people express an interest in other activities, which will indicate
  - » Also track number of hotel referrals which may indicate a desire to travel
- Maintain increased engagement by social media followers and fans
- Attain \$0.12 or lower cost per engagement on boosted social media posts
- Obtain new email news subscribers with a cost per new lead of \$2.50 or under.
- Maintain 25-30% open rates in email newsletters
- Obtain 2-3 story placements per month

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## Goals and Tactics: Visitor Services

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### Visitor Services

**Goals:** Enhance the physical visitor experience to SoIN through distribution of relevant information on partner attractions, accommodations, and dining establishments to potentially extend the current visit or encourage future visitation

#### Tactics

- Once restrictions on travel are lifted, seek out walkable traffic "hot spots"

#### Measurements

- Open Visitor Center with new health and safety procedures in place
- Set a schedule with local officials to set up the SoIN tent at walkable, high-traffic areas (Ex: Big Four Bridge) to distribute visitor information

## SoIN Tourism Industry and Community Relations

**Goals:** Solidify personal relationships with business partners and ensure SoIN Tourism is seen as a trusted, empathetic partner. Expand awareness of SoIN Tourism as an effective industry leader and marketer.

### Target Audiences

- Business partners
- Elected officials
- Community leaders
- Residents

### Tactics

- Share this recovery plan with stakeholders at all levels
- Op-ed highlighting the impact on local tourism and plans for recovery. Spirit of Travel, National Travel & Tourism Week May 2-10
- More frequent stakeholder email newsletters as new information warrants
- Special Edition: Team SoIN online meetings to get information from business partners and educate about opportunities
- Regular updates from executive director to elected officials

### Measurements

- Increased engagement with business partners
- Increased engagement with elected officials
- Media coverage of Covid-19 impacts on tourism industry & SoIN Tourism efforts

## SoIN Tourism Resource Management

### Financial Goal

Minimize expenditures during regroup phase

### Administrative Goal

Build a framework for flexible decision making. Provide a supportive and engaging environment for professional staff during sudden changes in the tourism market and their work environment.

### Priorities for Resources

1. Overhead and contract commitments
2. Sales and Marketing Staff
3. Industry supporting marketing programs

## SoIN Tourism Budget Allocation

1. Estimated Revenue Projections - the original budget for 2020 forecast innkeepers tax revenue of \$1,778,000 (excludes capital development funds). As of April, we forecast \$996,000 total receipts during 2020 or a decrease of \$782,000. This forecast will change. (Recommend chart showing pre-covid forecast, April forecast with difference)
2. The expense budget has been reduced to \$1.13 million requiring deficit/reserve spending of \$132,000.
3. Additional expenditures for sales and marketing leading up to and through recovery will be committed by the board out of reserves based on proposals from staff.