

CATCH DES MOINES

Des Moines Customer Advisory Board Meeting Minutes May 23-24, 2022



Customer Advisory Board Members

- Mary Byrne - UnityPoint Health
- Dan Cataldi - Iowa Soccer Association
- Bel Hanson - International Society for Computational Biology
- Teresa Cox - Corteva Agriscience
- Monica Russell - American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- Jennifer Rush – NACADA - Academic Advising Association
- Teresa Parmenter - Iowa Amateur Athletic Union
- Brenda Shaver - American Public Works Association
- Lauren Swanson - National Pork Producers Council
- Scott Wunn - National Speech and Debate Association

Catch Des Moines Leadership and Staff

- Greg Edwards, President & CEO
- Trina Flack, Vice President of Sales
- Chris Baker, Director of Event Experience
- Brock Konrad, Vice President of Marketing
- Carolyn Devine, Sales & Project Manager

Guests and Speakers

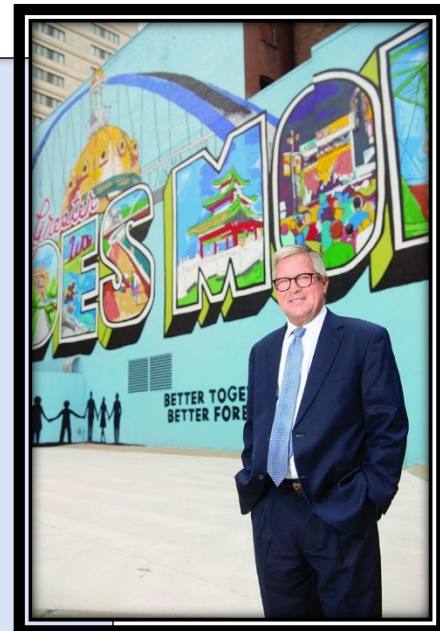
- Lauren Bryant - Flynn Wright
- Jeff White - Flynn Wright
- Sophia Hyder Hock - Destinations International



Catch Des Moines CEO Update

Greg Edwards provided an overview of key issues; the following summarizes his comments:

- Tourism provides 16,000 jobs in Des Moines
- ¼ US population live within 6-hour drive
- 80% convention attendees drive to Des Moines
- [DSM Airport](#) offers 122 daily flights to 31 cities
 - New hub [Allegiant Airlines](#)
 - New \$325 million airport terminal in development; expect 2026 completion
- Walkable city
 - 4 miles of skywalks connect 1,500 downtown hotel rooms and miles of walking trails
 - 100+ restaurants and 20+ attractions within blocks of the Iowa Events Center
- 136 hotels with 13,800 rooms
 - 15 hotels downtown hotels offer 2,500 rooms
- Des Moines is a significant financial and insurance hub with 63 companies based here



- Attractions

Attractions

- Adventureland
- Birthplace of John Wayne
- Blank Park Zoo
- Boone & Scenic Valley Railroad & Museum
- Brenton Skating Plaza
- Center Grove Orchard
- Climb Iowa East Village
- Dinner Detective Murder Mystery Show
- Discover XR
- Downtown Farmers' Market
- Geisler Farms
- Great Escape
- Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden
- Heritage Carousel
- Historic Swanson House & Clive Depot
- Historic Valley Junction
- Iowa Gold Star Military Museum
- Iowa Hall of Pride
- Iowa Latino Heritage Festival
- Iowa State Capitol
- Iowa State Fair
- John & Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park
- Lauridsen Skatepark
- Living History Farms
- Mainframe Studios
- Outlets of Des Moines
- The Palms Theatres & IMAX
- Prairie Meadows Casino Racetrack & Hotel
- Reiman Gardens
- Salisbury House & Gardens
- Saylorville Lake Marina
- Science Center of Iowa
- Seven Oaks Recreation
- The Slaughterhouse
- Sleepy Hollow Sports Park
- State Historical Museum of Iowa
- Terrace Hill
- Warrior Lanes
- Winefest Des Moines
- World Food Prize Hall of Laureates

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- Sports – minor league city

Major upcoming events

Upcoming Major Events

Nursing Organizations Alliance	NAIA Men's Volleyball Championships	American Meat Science Association	World Pork Expo	Indy Car Series (Newton)	American Association of Meat Processors	State Games of America
USA Gymnastics	AASHTO	Farm Progress	IRONMAN	American Quilters	Red Bull Soapbox Race	NetLynx Sports Midwest JVA Challenge
National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives	AAU Regional Track & Field Qualifier	Association of Medical Illustrators	Principal Charity Classic	All-Iowa Attack Basketball	American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators	USA Racquetball Junior Championship
International Tuba Euphonium Assoc Great Plains Regional	Iowa High School Soccer Tournament	Missouri Valley Conference Track & Field Conference Championship	PGI Thunderstruck Over Iowa			

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- More golf courses per capita vs. any other state
- Des Moines is Booming
 - [Midamerican Energy Company Recplex](#)
 - [Lauridsen Skatepark](#)
 - [Grimesplex & Hope Entertainment District](#)
 - [Icon Water Trails](#)
 - [USHL Bucs Hockey Arena At Merle Hay Mall](#)
 - [USL Pro Iowa Soccer Stadium](#)
 - [DMPS/Drake Stadium](#)
 - [Johnston Ignit Sports Facility](#)
 - [Bombers Golf & Entertainment Venue - Johnston](#)
 - [Prairie Trail Sports Complex - Ankeny](#)



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- Des Moines is **Des Best**
 - Surety Hotel named the Chicest Place to Stay in Iowa (housebeautiful.com)
 - Des Moines named a best city for young professionals (policygenius.com)
 - Top 10 City to Live in After the Pandemic (today.com)
 - #2 Safest Place to Live (realestate.usnews.com)
 - Iowa named #1 State Recovering Quickest from COVID-19 (wallethub.com)
 - Des Moines Ranks Among Most Sustainable Cities (siteselection.com)
 - Des Moines Ranked #13 on 150 Best Places to Live in the U.S. in 2021 - 2022 (realestate.usnews.com)
 - #7 Best Place to Live in the U.S. (realestate.usnews.com)
 - #8 Best City to Live in After the Pandemic (businessinsider.com)
 - One of the U.S. Cities Best Positioned to Bounce Back from the Pandemic (finance.yahoo.com)

Post COVID Pandemic Realities

CAB members had an open conversation regarding their meeting and event forecasts and expected post pandemic changes; the following summarizes their comments:

- Corporate contracting seeing more decentralized internal contracting vs. prior consolidated use of third party contracting resulting in less control, less contract continuity
- New contract language may include: If an organization is doing a self-contained event in conjunction with a larger external event (e.g., tradeshow), ability to cancel if the larger event cancels
- Some organizations use own contracts for large events, local chapters use own contracts for smaller events, but many rely on leadership for contract advice
- Use of franchise hotels cited as problematic including staffing issues
- Mask and vaccine mandates at events vary by group and location
- 65% forecasted attendance (vs. pre-pandemic) is typical, but some groups are higher
- Most seeing less hotel and venues contract flexibility
- Availability is compressed due to re-bookings
- Relationships with DMO leaders is very meaningful for many planners
 - Many DMO and supplier positions have shifted due to COVID
 - Some new relationships are quick to ramp up when they are well aware of customer account needs
- Some cite “cutthroat” marketplace conditions
- Changing travel patterns for events resulting in less shoulder night stays; attendees want to get in and out as soon as possible
- Some third-party relationships work well, “saved us during pandemic” but very account specific
 - Some planners will pick a destination based on local hotels agreeing to third party commissionable rates
- Trusted relationships are especially impactful
- DE&I politics dictate site selection for some groups
- Many groups seeing strong demand to reconvene face-to-face

Event Design

- Scientific and medical sectors seeing need for ongoing hybrid meetings
 - Hybrid has significant budget impact resulting in some planners pushing back hard on AV and production companies to mitigate costs
 - Some using less robust event design, simple room and stage sets to keep costs down
- Some groups using pre pandemic year event design sets
- Production companies (Freeman etc.) reduced presence
- Supply chain and staffing issues
 - Accelerated deadlines for guaranteed attendee numbers and payment
 - Resulting in providing best guess estimates
 - Shipping delays including international inbound port delays

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Event Design (Continued)

- Many attendees and exhibitors are opting into COVID waiver during registration
- Some agriculture groups have removed all COVID language
- Some review hotel contracts factoring result of potential COVID related cancellation
- Some have added language linking mandated venue cancellation generating no penalty hotel cancellation

Services

- Set expectations in advance and share with attendees
- One planner experienced poor service caused by off-site (remote) convention services in a franchise hotel

Transportation

- Uber and Lyft have improved over last few months
 - Increased costs
- One planner is building in contingency timing to accommodate flight delays

Sustainability

- One group uses [EIC Centre for Sustainability and Social Impact](#) standards
- One planner uses weighted sustainability ranking in bids evaluations



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Guest Attendees:

- Brad Dell, Iowa State University & Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival
- Emily Schettler, Harkin Institute at Drake University
- Vicki Arias Kepler, ASM Global
- Jaquie Easley, MercyOne Medical

[Sophia Hyder Hock](#), Chief Diversity Officer from Destinations International led the group through an interactive discussion regarding diversity, equity and inclusion, the following summarizes key outcomes:



SOPHIA HYDER HOCK
Chief Diversity Officer
Destinations International

Breakout Group Feedback



- Perceptions of Iowa through the lens of travelers belonging to diverse groups?
 - Iowa comprised of white farmers
 - Des Moines and bigger cities are social and political “islands”; they’re more open and accepting
 - Visitors feel “Iowa nice” but they “don’t feel they belong”
 - LGBTQ+ may be more accepted; [Iowa was 3rd state to recognize same sex marriage](#)
 - Some leaders believe in diversity, but not in equity
 - Diversity [Pie metaphor](#)
 - Ideally Iowa should display “mindset of abundance vs. scarcity” and welcome all visitors
 - Iowa has “no culture” it’s homogeneous
 - Many locals have no exposure to diversity; and are “Bible Belt fundamentalists”
 - General lack of diversity
 - Iowa meets the “minimum standards, but doesn’t go above and beyond” in welcoming everyone



Please describe any discussions you have with clients to alleviate logistical or psychological safety concerns

- Pre-event surveys, “asking all the right questions” about attendees needs to include diet, mobility, accessibility etc.
- Understand learning levels to ensure room design serves participants’ expectations
- Understanding attendee needs during pre-planning
- Turnkey DE&I/CRS programs at DMO can be tipping point to book events
- Open transparent conversations

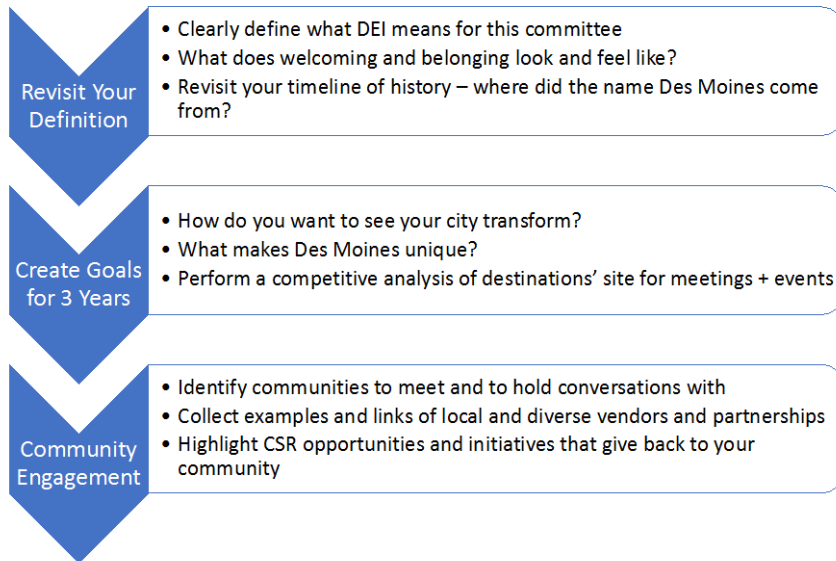
How are you creating spaces that are welcoming for the community, event attendees and visitors?

- Community leader testimonials
- Welcoming all learning styles
- Diet needs
- ASL at events

Activation Concepts

- Develop DE&I check lists
- Sharing DE&I examples and activations “front and center” at events
- Share examples from other competitive destinations

Moving Forward: Local DEI Engagement



Moving Forward: Top 5 Items For Your RFP

Diverse Vendor Lists

CSR opportunities

Offsite leadership and learning opportunities

Local speakers and applicable experiences

How will my attendees feel physically and psychologically safe?



Contact Information

Sophia Hyder Hock - Chief Diversity Officer, Destinations International
2025 M Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036
202.835.4088 - shyderhock@destinationsinternational.org



The CAB experienced a tour of [Fairgrounds](#), [Gray's Lake Park](#), [USL Soccer](#), [Almost Famous Popcorn](#) displayed by [The Good Co. DSM](#), [Lauridsen Skatepark](#), [ICON Water Trails](#) and a drink from [Your Private Bar](#)

DESTINATION MASTER PLAN

- The Destination Master Plan is in development
- It is a living document in partnership with [JLL](#) (the dominant consulting firm in this space)
- Main priorities
 - Ensuring the plan is relevant to local stakeholders and customers
 - Diminishing community isolated planning (duplicate soccer field development cited as an example)
 - Optimizing downtown area
 - Rightsizing facilities for sports groups
 - Extending overnight stays using data driven information
 - Partnering with [Arrivalist](#)
 - Maximizing event driven visitations
 - Potential to create a Des Moines specific event is under review
- Total economic impact (vs. room nights only) is used as the DMO's business measurement criteria

Feedback

- Many exhibitors make buying decisions based on loyalty affiliation vs. room blocks
- Room blocks are shrinking despite same or increased attendance
- Hoteliers are (understandable) unhappy with measurement shift to total economic impact vs. room night production
- Housing pirates remain an issue
- Room blocks provide planners with added negotiation power
- Examples of cities that market and package destination events and development well include:
 - Milwaukee: [Summerfest](#)
 - Austin: [SXSW](#)
 - New Orleans: [Mardi Gras Jazz Fest](#), [Halloween](#)
 - Montreal: [C2](#)
 - Calgary: [Calgary Stampede](#) is used effectively year-round as destination story
 - Potential to use farming as magnetic destination story
 - Farming is cool ([Farm to Table](#) movement)
 - Some cite potential negative context to farming from DE&I perspective
- While there's lots to do here, many activities aren't physically connected



Catch Des Moines Website

- Planners want:
 - Very easy access to stock photos with iconic images
 - One complete event tool kit
 - Create buckets of information, all easily linkable
 - User friendly calendar of local events
 - 50 & 100 perfect words about the city
- Once contract is signed – send access to all tools
 - However, be aware of timelines
 - Some groups booking years out don't want access immediately
- Current website is very white – not diverse

When asked to outline the first steps taken during a new site search; the following were discussed:

- [ICCA](#) search
- Pragmatic based search – “will the event fit at the right budget”
- Convention Center website
- Outreach to the DMO
- Contact local members
- Discussion with internal planning team
- After site selection steps
 - Ensure DMO staff is easy to contact
 - Staff listing should include market responsibility, names, title, direct office & cell phone numbers, email, and photo
 - Some planners contact hotel directly during and after site selection
 - Some planners use [Hopskip](#)

Sales & Service Tools

The CAB was asked to describe ideal and memorable sales and service experiences, the following summarizes their comments:

- Well-tailored personalized site tours makes impact
 - Customized to the group
 - Small touches make big impacts
 - Personal connections during a site make a huge difference
- Highly experiential experiences make major impact
- Ask planners about their preferences in advance and always deliver
 - Don't ask and then not deliver
- Planners want to talk with sales team during site planning preparation
- Many planners want to experience the “same steps” as attendees will during the event
- Airport transfer expectations varies widely by planner
 - Some want airport pick up while other want to experience Uber, taxi or public transport
 - Some want self-service airport transfers for site inspection
 - Offer airport transfer for planner during the event
- Ask about groups' VIPs and follow through appropriately
- Welcome from DMO leader and Hotel GM cited as impactful

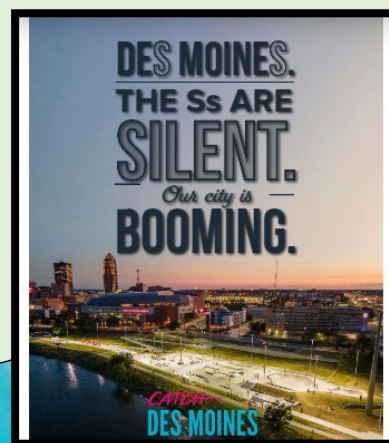
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Destination Information

- Digital Marketing materials must be event app compatible
- Tools used include
 - [Crowd Compass](#)
 - [A2Z](#)
 - [Attendee Hub](#)
- Registration Staffing
 - Very desirable when booked via DMO
 - Some rely on DMCs and staffing agencies
- Some (not all) planners want robust on-site media support to generate press coverage with strong local knowledge
- Planners seek CSR legacy projects
 - Seek local funds to augment project
 - DMO to make local connections to projects
 - Turnkey projects desirable for some
 - Need fully vetted list of project opportunities

Open Topics

- Need for and success obtaining cash incentives varies by group
- State grants cited as impactful
- Connecting group planner to local sponsors is desirable
- “Show me your badge” discounts are welcome



The CAB was thanked for their participation and commitment to Des Moines, next meeting dates will follow.

Action Items & Recommendations Diversity Equity & Inclusion

- Develop and share DE&I specific checklists easily accessible to planners
 - Include local translators including [ASL](#)
 - Minority owned businesses
 - Venues with gender neutral bathrooms or the ability to produce them
- Define DE&I for local stakeholders and the committee

Catch Des Moines Website

- CAB asked to review website
 - Share feedback with [Brock](#) and [Trina](#) regarding areas of improvement, including easiest starting points

Local Legacy CSR Projects

- Create fully vetted list of project opportunities

