



Hamilton County Tourism, Inc.
2024 Marketing, Sales, Sports and Visitor Experience Plan

Destination Marketing Strategy

Hamilton County Tourism (HCT) will launch a new campaign to reflect lessons learned in data intelligence and visitor sentiment to remain competitive in the marketplace. The new campaign will focus on Hamilton County's cities, assets within the destination and messaging that inspires travel, all building off positive leisure visitor momentum from 2023.

Like the past two years, this campaign will focus on the shoulder seasons, mid-March thru May and August thru October. The campaign will target the Chicago DMA and digital-only statewide Indiana and adjacent states.

While messaging is still being crafted, the campaign's goal is to continue building awareness of our destination through strategic (traditional and digital) advertising, positive media coverage and promotion.

Digital Marketing Strategy

Hamilton County Tourism works diligently with strategic partner, Simpleview to craft an online experience that performs. Testing and studying the online experience from the first click is key to understanding what consumers are looking for. Digital strategy is measured by crafting and sculpting content to inform and inspire visitors to take the next step to learn more, click to a partner page or opt-in to one of Hamilton County's e-newsletters or request a travel guide.

Earned Media Strategy

Hamilton County Tourism continues to work with Turner PR, a national firm specializing in travel and tourism. Turner's team will focus on regional and national media placements to elevate our destination and inspire audiences in target markets to visit Hamilton County for leisure getaways focusing on Art + Design, Culinary, Family Travel, Music and Events. This strategy includes a combination of ongoing collection of important local stories and experts that might resonate outside central Indiana as well as using Turner PR's connections to understand what national stories are trending that might feature local stories.

- Host influencers (and travel media) throughout the year to focus on monthly themes.
- Collaborate and amplify Conner Prairie's new experience, Promised Land as Proving Ground.
- Supports HCSA and HCT media announcements.

Promotions Strategy

Hamilton County Tourism launches annual promotional campaigns to support local business and generate excitement. In 2024, Hamilton County will amplify two savings pass campaigns –Tenderloin Tuesdays™ and the Hamilton County Savings Pass, a new pass targeting meetings and sports attendees, with deals and special offers from restaurants and attractions, as well as the Doable & Viewable Art Pass.

Other Marketing Initiatives

- Enhance and expand VisitHamiltonCounty.com and other digital marketing channels to drive the consumer's journey – defined as “look to book to bricks,” or “view to visit,” including email opt-ins, while maintaining flexibility and responsiveness to consumers.
 - Work with HCT's strategic partner, Simpleview to
 - Redesign Visit Hamilton County website to increase site performance and grow market share and to remain competitive.
 - Paid social media strategy for promotions and campaigns to drive consideration, engagement, partner referrals and opt-ins.
 - Finesse an existing paid search strategy.
 - Test and adjust landing page performance on the web platform to ensure a positive user experience.
- Diversify storytelling through new video series, expanded influencer collaborations and collections.
- Update the crisis plan.
- **Regenerative Tourism Action Item** – In addition to supporting Inspire Hamilton County with design and promotions needs, continue to invest in video and digital photography to reflect a more diverse audience.

Sales In-Person Strategies

HCT has been steadfast with sales efforts to keep Hamilton County top of mind with meeting planners. In 2024, the sales team will continue to focus on the following group markets: Meetings/Events, Golf and Wedding. In 2024, HCT is currently planning to attend 10 industry trade shows to pursue new business and reinforce existing relationships. New tradeshow have been added that have not been attended in the past, based on changes in the marketplace:

Tradeshow Schedule

RCMA	<u>January 9-11</u>
Corporate Express	March 4-8
Small & Boutique Meetings	April or July
FEA	May 29-June 1
ISAE	July 16-17
Destination Midwest	<u>August TBD</u>
PFA	<u>Sept. 5-7</u>
Small Market Meetings	<u>Sept. 25-27</u>
Finance & Insurance Professionals	Nov. 10-13
Holiday Showcase	<u>Dec. 2-3</u>

Sales Marketing Strategies

HCT will continue a “tradigital” marketing approach to build awareness of the destination as a meetings and event destination (a combination of traditional print and promotions coupled with a strategic digital campaign.) In addition to trade show activations and print advertising in niche publications, HCT will maintain an increased presence on CVENT to build awareness and lead generation for Hamilton County facilities and hotels. HCT will also continue a LinkedIn advertising campaign to connect digitally with meeting and event planner and relaunch the successful wedding campaign. Additionally, HCT will push out the small meetings message with SMALL MEETINGS BIG OUTCOMES in new advertising campaigns.

Other Sales Initiatives

- Plan and execute eight out of area planner site visits to highlight all Hamilton County has to offer.
- Continue the “Small Meetings. Big Outcomes.” campaign with new video and current mail items. This campaign highlights how Hamilton County’s sales and visitor experience teams can make a meeting planner’s job easier.
- HCT will revisit the golf market with Golf 2.0, engaging with all 9 courses to evaluate where the needs are and how we can improve business for them and the hotels.

BEST Study

The sales team will use findings from the Best Study to determine the path to larger meeting and events that will drive room nights to the county.

Sport In-Person Strategies

HCT has been steadfast with sales efforts to keep Hamilton County top of mind with sport planners. In 2024, HCT will continue to focus on Sport. In 2024, HCT will attend sports tradeshows, conduct site visits, go on sales mission trips and strategically target prospects.

Sport Marketing Strategies

HCT will continue a “tradigital” marketing approach to build awareness of the destination as sports destination through a combination of traditional print ads, new website, social media and Playeasy. In 2023, the HCSA collaborated with CHARGE, a sports marketing and sponsorship agency. Looking ahead to 2024, the HCSA will implement a strategic plan focused on building the HCSA brand, developing event capacity and advocating for county stakeholders.

Conferences to Attend

Sports ETA	April 22-25	Portland, OR
Esports Travel Summit	May 29-31	Raleigh, NC
TEAMS	<u>Sept. 23-26</u>	Anaheim, CA
ACES	<u>Oct. 14-16</u>	Huntsville, AL
US Sports Congress	Dec. 9-11	Port Charlotte FL

BEST Study

As one of the nation’s premiere destinations for competitive sport, the HCSA lead a comprehensive study of the Business of Entertainment, Sports and Tourism (BEST). The next phase is to identify capital projects for funding in 2025 and investing in capital improvement projects at local sports venues.

Other Sports Initiatives

Research, understand and create a strategic plan for esports.

Visitor Experience Initiatives

HCT's Visitor Experience Team assists groups with their planning needs to make their event memorable in Hamilton County. From welcome signage and kits to transportation services, partner referrals and even volunteer recruitment. In 2023, the Visitor Experience Team serviced over 100 groups, across all markets, including meetings and sporting events, and plans to stay on pace and possibly exceed that number in 2024.

Visitor Experience Initiatives

Focus on several key sports and meeting groups to provide an elevated experience and increased planner engagement and streamline other group services through a welcome kit.

- With the growth of the meetings and sports market, along with the Sports' Team growing, the Visitor Experience Team will hone in on servicing key groups as deemed by the Sales and Sports' Teams, considering the number of room nights, time of year and other tourism-related criteria. These groups will receive personalized services and additional planning attention. Other groups will receive complimentary welcome services in the form of a welcome kit, which will include bulk Travel Guides and promotional items, along with an array of digital resources and partner referrals.

Formalize the 5-year meeting anniversary "thank you" program tested in 2023.

- To thank meetings and conferences for their continued business to Hamilton County, groups will receive a complimentary "Thank You" treat for all attendees during their fifth year in-county meeting. Thank you treats are ordered and fulfilled through the meeting venue's food and beverage department and usually consist of trays of sweet treats delivered during a meeting break. To formalize the program, an informational flier will be created to share with meeting planners along with on-site signage. This program was informally rolled out in 2023 and with much success, taking the next steps to formalize in 2024.

Research and implement new visitor engagement tool(s) in HCT office lobby for walk-in visitors.

- With Hamilton County Tourism's office renovation, the lobby is fresh and bright which creates a nice first impression for walk-in visitors inquiring about Hamilton County and seeking visitor information. Aside from the updated brochure rack, the Visitor Experience Team will research other practical ways to interact with walk-in visitors to ensure a warm and memorable welcome to Hamilton County. The team will then take the necessary steps to implement.

Raise awareness of volunteer opportunities in the county by working with marketing and destination development to increase presence on the website and communicating out to groups.

In addition to promoting impactful, one-off tourism-related event volunteer opportunities, the Visitor Experience Team will expand to promote year-round volunteer opportunities in Hamilton County. The Visitor Experience Team will lean on partner connections Destination Development has with local nonprofit and social services groups to understand opportunities and how best to support the needs of the local community. Once this information is collected, it will be displayed in the Volunteer section of the Hamilton County Tourism's website. If there is an urgent need, the Visitor Experience Team will alert through email the Hamilton County Tourism volunteer list as it does with one-off events.

In addition to servicing external groups and events, the Visitor Experience Team also assists with planning and executing internal partner summits to keep industry stakeholders informed of the latest trends, best practices and various industry topics. Partner summits for 2024 include (subject to change):

Grand Park Partner Summit	Q1
BEST Webinar	Q1
Tourism Partner Summit	Q2
Social Media Summit	Q3
Hotel Summit	Q3
Sports Summit	Q4
Holiday Open House	Q4

Finally, as a core competency, the Visitor Experience Team continues to focus on production of the popular Hamilton County Travel Guide and Hamilton County mass-distribution Visitor Information Guide. Visitor Experience manages distribution to partners, consumers, and at strategic distribution points throughout Indiana and the Midwest. In total, more than 80,000 guides are distributed annually. Inventory is taken throughout the year to ensure all guides are being used in-season.