



**Hamilton County Tourism, Inc.  
2023 Marketing, Sales and Visitor Experience Plan**

**Destination Marketing Strategy**

Hamilton County Tourism (HCT) will relaunch the “Why Wait for the Weekend” campaign in 2023 after a very successful multi-tiered marketing program in 2022 and to maintain Hamilton County’s positive leisure visitor momentum.

Like 2022, this campaign will focus on the shoulder seasons, mid-March thru May, and August thru October. Pre-COVID and in 2022, the campaign targeted the Chicago DMA and digital-only statewide Indiana. However, in 2023, HCT will add a second market, Cincinnati for the spring portion of the campaign in hope of including the DMA for the fall portion as well with adequate response.

The *Why Wait* campaign message will be used again to continue building awareness of our county as a “more than a weekend” destination through strategic (traditional and digital) advertising, positive media coverage and promotion. This messaging drove additional weekday leisure travel in 2022.

**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. Crafting and sculpting content to inform and inspire visitors take the next step to learn more, click to a partner page, opt-in to one of Hamilton County’s e-newsletters or request a travel guide.

**GOAL:** Generate Website Users (GA4) of 1,100,879 (a growth over 2022 - 1,028,859)

- Engaged Sessions – 334,524
- Qualified Sessions – 189,079

**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, sport, and meetings. This strategy includes a combination of ongoing collection of important local stories 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.

**GOAL:** Generate 100 media placements – Local, Regional, National

- 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.

## Promotions Strategy

Hamilton County Tourism launches annual promotional campaigns to support local business and generate excitement. In 2023, Hamilton County will do just that with two annual savings pass campaigns – The Great Dine Out and Tenderloin Tuesdays™.

A third savings pass, the Grand Park Savings Pass, will launch as a perk for park users. This pass includes deals and discounts to local restaurants and things to do when teams are not competing.

New in 2023 is the Hamilton County Art Pass. This promotion will guide residents and visitors around the county from city-to-city, immersing users in public art and art experiences. The art passport is one component of a comprehensive campaign focused on growing awareness of Hamilton County's growing art scene developed as a result of community input.

**Goal:** Launch one new, and increase engagement in all four Bandwango Passports

- The Great Dine Out – January
- Grand Park Savings Pass – March – December
- Hamilton County Arts Pass – April - December
- Tenderloin Tuesdays™ – June 27 – July 31

## 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
  - o Launch a paid social media strategy for promotions and campaigns to drive consideration, engagement, partner referrals and opt-ins.
  - o Finesse an existing paid search strategy.
  - o Test and adjust landing page performance on the web platform to ensure a positive user experience.
- Develop a refreshed and strategic email marketing campaign with relevant content and design that segments audience based on type – visitor and resident – as well as interest.
- Explore concepts and activate an in-market, interconnected partner promotion that deepens the visitor experience and drives guests to similar or compatible experiences.
- Diversify storytelling of our destination:
  - o Longform – contract with a freelance writer to assist with content for sales and sports stories.
  - o Video – create a layered strategy of video for social, low through mid and high production to tell deeper stories of our destination.
- Conduct ongoing market research.
  - o Zartico – provides insights on destination performance to allow data-led marketing decisions.
  - o SMARI Advertising Effectiveness Research
  - o SMARI Visitor Sentiment | Resident Sentiment

### **Sales & Sport In-Person Strategies**

HCT has been steadfast with sales efforts to keep Hamilton County top of mind with meeting and sport planners. In 2023, HCT will continue to focus on the following niche (group) markets: Meetings/Events, Sport, Wedding and Golf. In 2023, HCT will attend six sports tradeshow, two consumer golf shows and nine meeting/event tradeshow.

### **Sales & Sport Marketing Strategies**

HCT will continue a “tradigital” marketing approach to build awareness of the destination as a meetings, events and sports destination (a combination of traditional print and promotions coupled with a strategic digital campaign.) In addition to tradeshow activations and print advertising in niche publications, HCT has an increased presence on Cvent to build awareness and lead generation for Hamilton County facilities and hotels. HCT will also launch a LinkedIn advertising campaign to connect digitally with meeting and event planner and relaunch the successful wedding campaign.

### **Tradeshow Schedule**

#### **Golf**

West Michigan Golf Show	February 10-12
Chicago Golf Show	February 24-26

#### **Meetings**

RCMA	January 24-26
CMCA	May 22-24
FEA	May 31-June 3
ISAE	July 24-26
Connect	August 24-28
PFA	September 7-9
Small Market Meetings	September 27-29
MPI GLES	November 12-14
Destination Showcase	December 29-30

#### **Sports**

Sports ETA	May 8-11
E-Sports Travel Summit	July 12-14
ACES	September 11-13
S.P.O.R.T.S	September 11-14
TEAMS	October 2-5
US Sports Congress	December 3-6

### **BEST Study**

As one of the nation’s premiere destinations for competitive sport, the HCSA is leading a comprehensive study of the Business of Entertainment, Sports and Tourism (BEST) study that will provide a roadmap for the future. The study will inform:

- Funding strategies to provide additional financial investments in entertainment, sports and tourism products that meet defined criteria.
- Understand what products would provide both a great return on investment for tourism as well as continue to support Hamilton County as a great place to live, work and invest in.
- Identify the structure for investments.

### **Other Sales Initiatives**

Plan and execute a third party meeting planner event to highlight all Hamilton County has to offer.

Refresh the “Rest Easy” campaign with new video and additional gift promotions. This campaign highlights how Hamilton County’s sales and visitor experience teams can make a meeting planner’s job easier.

Research, understand and create a strategic plan for both Esports and Olympic National Governing Body growth.

## 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 and even volunteer recruitment. In 2022, the Visitor Experience Team serviced 110 groups, including meetings and sporting events, and plans to stay on pace and possibly exceed that goal in 2023.

## Visitor Experience Initiatives

- Support community events by launching best practices in sustainability.
  - o Current sustainability efforts are on a spectrum. The first phase of this initiative is to identify local partners and service providers who have an active sustainability focus. From there, the team will connect them with event planners and organizers who wish to do the same. HCT will create a "How To" PDF for event planners and organizers that wish to take first steps in hosting sustainable events.
- Research trends and implement new service ideas to innovate the visitor welcome.
  - o This will allow for better communication, connection and overall welcome to Hamilton County.
- Support community events and partners with a volunteer assistance program.
  - o Volunteers are continually needed for various community events, local partners, and incoming groups. The Visitor Experience Team will take a proactive role in identifying these needs and creating a strategy to help bridge the volunteer gap. Such strategy includes communication with HCT's volunteer list, social media promotion, and if needed, print ads in local community newspapers and publications. Super Service, the online, self-paced training program, will be maintained. As we share an online platform with Visit Indy, the industry's premier volunteer program, a new online platform is being researched with a potential overhaul in 2024.

In addition to servicing external groups and events, the Visitor Experience Team also assists with planning and executes internal partner summits to keep industry stakeholders informed of the latest trends, best practices, and various industry topics. Internal partner summits for 2023 include (subject to change):

Social Media and the First Amendment Workshop	January 18
Grand Park Partner Summit	February 8
2024 Eclipse Summit	March 8
Hotel Workforce and Forecast Summit	June 21
Client Event at Colts Training Camp	August
General Tourism Summit	November 9
Holiday Open House at New Offices	December 14

*New!* Coordinating 6-8 "Tourism Talks" video package on special topics

Finally, as a core competency, the Visitor Experience Team continues to focus on production of the popular Hamilton County Travel Guide, Hamilton County mass-distribution Visitor Information Guide and Hamilton County Golf 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.