



# Business Plan

FISCAL YEAR 2024-25

*Visit*

**HERSHEY &  
HARRISBURG**

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Based on input from hundreds of global destination leaders, the Destination NEXT Futures Study is the most comprehensive analysis available of the trends and forces that affect destination marketing organizations. Key findings include:

## COMMUNITY & DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

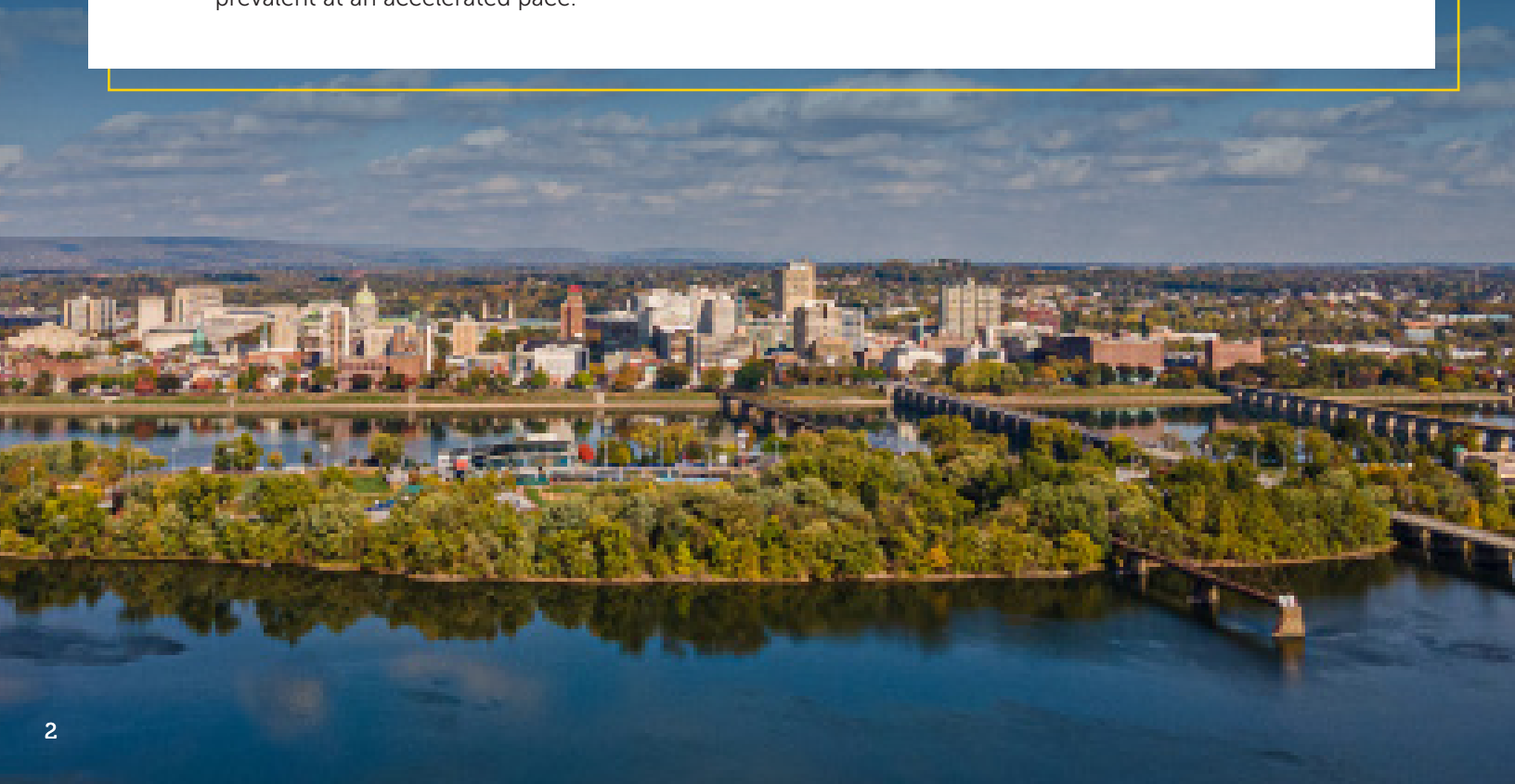
The **top trends** impacting our industry's future are heavily indexed around how destination organizations are working and aligning with their communities:



- Customers are increasingly seeking a unique, authentic travel experience.
- Building a DEI-A strategy with the overarching goal of highlighting the welcoming and inclusive nature of the destination is a priority.
- Destinations are looking at sustainability more broadly by becoming more relevant with non-tourism businesses to generate new revenue streams.
- Greater industry, community and government alignment is driving destination competitiveness and brand.
- More destinations are focusing on improving accessibility for travelers of all abilities.
- There is a greater focus on increasing development of sports tourism and cultural events for short and long-term growth.
- Artificial intelligence will become increasingly prevalent at an accelerated pace.

Likewise, the **top strategies** for destination organizations prioritize community, destination development and alignment.

- Protect revenue sources to maintain current funding levels.
- Focus on developing authentic experiences for the customer.
- Better integrate tourism and economic development.
- Build the destination brand around the community's goals, values and creative energy.
- Have a greater role in destination and product development.



# CORE STRATEGIES

VHH will use these core trends and strategies as a guide to facilitate a sustainable total destination experience for travelers in all segments.

- Implement initiatives based on the DEI-A strategic plan that includes identifying key markets and mediums to reach diverse target audiences.
- Focus content efforts on creating cohesive, impactful, and actionable message and voice strategies to inspire travel to the region.
- Develop more personal stories (profiles) focused on the people and small businesses that are at the heart of our destination.
- Facilitate better integration of tourism, economic development and talent attraction.
- Form more strategic alliances outside the traditional tourism industry.
- Identify and engage with key stakeholders to enhance existing trails and experiences and explore new development opportunities.
- Utilize communication strategies that engage local and regional media to amplify VHH initiatives, products, and programs.
- Develop and execute creative and compelling Marketing Campaigns to drive visitation to our region.
- Explore initiatives to continue to increase our role in destination and product development as it relates to sports and events.
- Increase sales efforts focused on creating more opportunities for partners to connect with planners and increase lead generation and room nights.



# DESTINATION ALIGNMENT STRATEGY

In early 2023 VHH engaged with place strategy experts, who have advised destinations, communities, cities, and governments around the world, to assist with development of a Destination Alignment Strategy.

Visit Hershey & Harrisburg in partnership with the Harrisburg Regional Chamber & CREDC, and Dauphin County, embarked on a significant Destination Strategy Alignment effort. This collaborative endeavor aimed to support tourism, economic growth and enhance the overall appeal of the destination by establishing a unified messaging platform.

The outcome of the 14 months of research and collaboration efforts resulted in the development of a Destination Alignment messaging toolkit which serves as a resource to guide our partners in effectively communicating our region to our diverse audiences.

## The Hershey Harrisburg Region Invites you to **Live Fully**.

We're a destination that puts people first. We're a destination and a home with experiences and opportunities that are as diverse as our people, so no one will have to choose between the right job and the right lifestyle, a trip for the kids or for the parents, great healthcare, or great schools.

To Live Fully is to live a life full of what's meaningful and authentic to you—the freedoms, responsibilities, opportunities, and fun that give you the greatest joy and satisfaction.

It means visiting or living in a place that offers choice, not compromise—that can both challenge you and make you comfortable, that offers the growth you want and the fulfillment you need in your work, your play, your city life and your private life.

The toolkit serves as a framework for conveying the unique strengths of the Hershey Harrisburg Region. By aligning our messaging efforts, we can amplify our impact and elevate the profile of our destination to attract, visitors, business, talent, and residents.

During FY24-25 VHH will build upon this strategic approach to not only support tourism, economic development and talent attraction efforts, but also foster a sense of cohesion and pride within our community. Together, we can showcase the rich tapestry of opportunities and experiences that define the Hershey Harrisburg Region as a premier destination for all.





## BUILDING A DEI-A STRATEGY

In mid-2023 VHH entered a multi-phased approach for DEI-A strategic plan development. Lead by a premier research firm in North America with a focus on research that dives into the sentiment, needs and priorities of groups underrepresented in the travel industry, we will work to develop and deploy data driven DEI-A marketing campaigns and initiatives.

**FY23-24 marked the completion of the following areas of focus:**



### **PHASE 1-Destination Discovery & Prioritization**

- Organizational DEI-A Mission Statement
- Current Situation Analysis Report
- Established DEI-A Goals, Strategic Objectives, Priority Pillars, and Best Practices



### **PHASE 2-Stakeholder Listening Sessions**

Identified key issues and prioritized content for inclusion in the surveys to be conducted in Phase 3.



### **PHASE 3-Survey of Diverse Existing & Prospective Leisure Travelers**

Further strengthened the depth and breadth of knowledge. The survey explored topics such as:

- Travel Preferences
- Travel Considerations
- Travel Activities
- Cultural Activity Perceptions
- Destination Perceptions
- Destination Marketing Perceptions

In FY24-25 VHH will continue to build our DEI-A Strategic Plan with a focus on phase 4 completion and development of an implementation strategy.

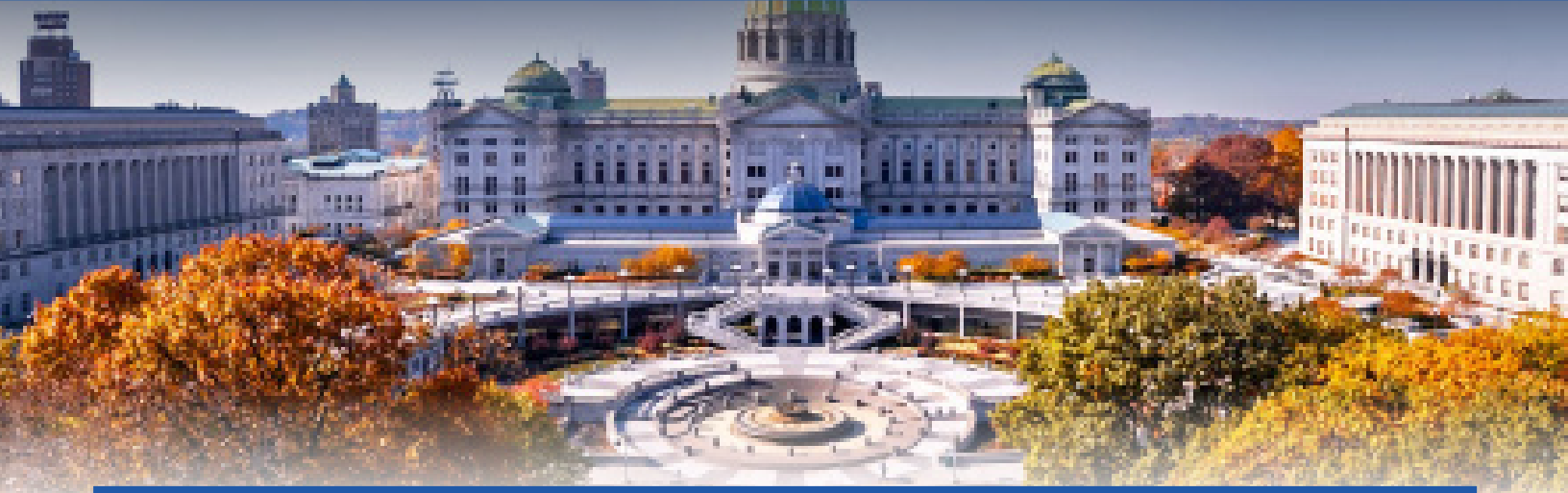


### **PHASE 4-Strategic Plan & Recommendations Development**

A final report summarizing high-level learnings and focus areas will be developed. Recommendations may focus on the following areas:

- Internal Training & Development
- Community Engagement
- Local Business Engagement & Promotion
- Cultural Programming Development & Participation
- Leisure Travel Marketing Opportunities





# MARKETING

## TRENDS

- AI-technology has rapidly become a part of the tool set to use in marketing.
- Travel for live events such as sporting events and concerts has increased.
- Solo travel has increased for a variety of reasons including self-care, reconnecting with self, and scheduling challenges with friends and family.

## GOALS

- **CREATE AND PROMOTE ACTIONABLE RESOURCES FOR TRIP PLANNING.**
- **ENHANCE AND EXTEND VISITORS' TRIPS.**
- **MAXIMIZE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MULTI-CHANNEL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS AND ORGANIC STORYTELLING TO ALL AUDIENCES.**

## OBJECTIVES

- Drive overnight visitation from primary outer markets to the Hershey Harrisburg Region.
- Position the Hershey Harrisburg Region as a “stay-cation” or “hidden gem” destination for local residents and neighbor markets including Lancaster, Lebanon, and York.
- Elevate the Hershey Harrisburg Region as a desirable and welcoming destination for diverse audiences.

## STRATEGIES

- Increase campaign frequency and impact by utilizing available grant funds to maximize exposure of our programs and offerings.
- Work with a third-party creative agency to develop inspiring campaigns for our primary outer market branding campaigns.
- Implement initiatives based on the DEI-A strategic plan that include:
  - Continued commitment to cultural and social diversity and inclusivity in photo and video content collection projects.
  - Identifying key markets and mediums to reach diverse target audiences.
- Target search campaigns toward large scale events (RV Show, GAOS, Farm Show, etc.) to provide valuable planning resources to visitors.
- Develop more personal stories (profiles) focusing on the people and small businesses that are at the heart of our destination.
- Continue to stay informed on and test AI technology & tools as they become available. Implement the tools when appropriate and develop best practice procedures.
- Optimize paid media campaigns by evaluating performance data including website analytics and visitor spend data.
- Promote the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Brew Barons Beer Trail in 2025.
- Encourage User Generated Content (UGC) with seasonal photo contests.



## TACTICS

### 1 OUTER MARKET CAMPAIGNS

Philly, NY, DC, Baltimore,  
Wilkes-Barre, Scranton

- Execute comprehensive multi-channel campaigns highlighting the region's vast array of attractions and experiences.
- Identify key mediums and placement including transit, billboards, video, and digital.
- Evaluate and build on the spring/summer 2024 Baltimore Overnight campaign to reinforce an ongoing message encouraging day-trippers to convert to overnight visitors.

### 2 LOCAL & REGIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Hershey & Harrisburg, Lebanon,  
Lancaster, York

- Year-round promotion of VHH trails and experiences through various mediums.
- Develop and implement a Brew Barons Beer Trail 5th anniversary campaign.
- Continue to implement marketing campaigns highlighting the Harrisburg Arts District.

### 3 LOCAL SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT CAMPAIGNS

- Longform website content (such as in-depth business profiles, artist interviews, or themed roundups) will be promoted through small scale social media investments.

### 4 PAID SEARCH CAMPAIGNS

Paid search campaigns are an effective way to inspire "add-a-day" or extended stays to guests visiting our region for a specific event. Directing visitors via an online search to a VHH high-value landing page for specific events will inspire additional engagement to other parts of our website.

- Plan 5-7 search campaigns specific to large-scale events with add-a-day opportunities.

### 5 CONTENT DISTRIBUTION OUTLETS

- **Website** - Maintain and create new content for VisitHersheyHarrisburg.org, our region's premier source of highly curated and detailed destination information.
- **Getaway Guide** - Design and distribute (via print and online versions) the annual Getaway Guide, a visitor resource thoughtfully curated with scene-setting photography and inspiring content.
- **Consumer e-newsletter** - Distribute monthly or as-needed Consumer emails highlighting upcoming events, cultural experiences, and regional attractions.

### 6 CONTENT COLLECTION

- Work with Content & Communications department to identify, coordinate and capture photos and video representative of our region to be used across all marketing channels.



# COMMUNICATIONS & CONTENT

Communications & Content efforts planned for FY24-25 are primarily extensions of programs and initiatives already underway as standard best practices. Where appropriate, we are expanding efforts to expected areas of need.

## COMMUNICATIONS

VHH brand and mission-focused messaging for media relations, travel writers, travel content creators, community awareness, and statewide advocacy efforts.

### OBJECTIVES

Elevate the following to appropriate stakeholders (Partners, government, media, local residents, and statewide & regional officials & representatives):

- Awareness of VHH's role in positively affecting local economic impact through tourism.
- Awareness of the diversity, variety, accessibility, and flexibility of tourism assets in Dauphin County.
- Awareness of VHH's commitment to leveraging the expertise of diverse community organizations to best facilitate our goals for a destination-wide embrace of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Awareness of extensive, region-wide VHH Destination Alignment efforts to align our economic development, talent attraction, and tourism propositions around a common and inspiring platform.

### TRENDS

- Listicles and roundups are popular story structures with quick-hitting tactics that appeal to audiences with high desire to travel but minimal time to plan.
- Hosted media traveling on assignment are less reliant on and less interested in DMO guided tours, preferring flexible itineraries that allow spontaneity and exploration.
- Short-staffed newsrooms will utilize social posts, pre-packaged interviews & content folders, and Zoom interviews to streamline coverage opportunities.





**STRATEGIES**

- Create and distribute news releases, website articles, Partner memos, and LinkedIn updates as new projects roll out, new business is confirmed, or regional accolades are announced.
- Develop a process for Partners to submit news and content for both internal and external sharing.
- Populate Media section of VisitHersheyHarrisburg.org with a mix of informational and inspirational content.
- Pre-package relevant images, videos, and VHH leadership interviews for media use and reference.
- Host and/or periodically meet with local and state representatives to provide destination and industry updates.
- Position VHH as local journalists’ go-to source and voice for tourism-related news and events in our region.
- Communicate VHH efforts to expand content, guides, and travel resources designed to highlight the region’s diversity, events, and culturally significant historical moments.
- Pitch succinct and timely story themes to journalists whose content interests align with the region’s assets and experiences.
- Develop a repeatable evaluation method for measuring PR impact.



**ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES**

**Trade Shows & Media Marketplaces**

- Mid-Atlantic Travel PR Alliance (MATPRA)
- Under Consideration: U.S. Travel Association’s IPW Media Marketplace, TravelMedia’s International Media Marketplace (IMM NYC), Society of American Travel Writers Annual Convention (SATW), North American Travel Journalists Association Conference (NATJA).



**PARTNER OUTREACH**

Engage tourism partners to support media visits, develop new story pitches, share VHH-developed content, and share Partner-developed video and photo content.

# CONTENT

Audience-specific website, social media, and marketing campaign copy aligned with the region’s tourism assets in Family, Couples, Outdoor, and Trails & Experiences categories.

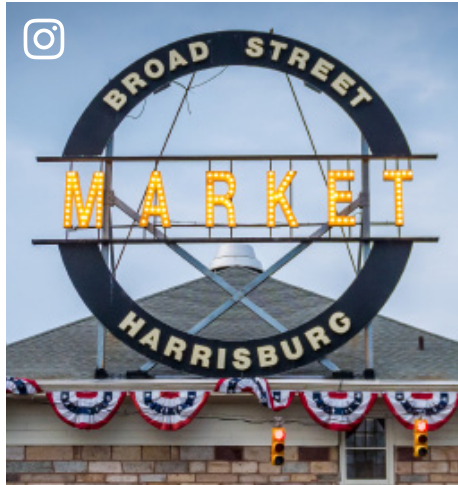
## TRENDS

- Travelers are eager to share photo & video social content (UGC) with DMOs, often becoming loyal destination ambassadors when their content is requested and/or credited.
- Special event reminders, multi-photo posts, and short video clips drive steady engagement and positively affect reach and impressions.
- Content creators (unlike earned media outlets) are often eager to participate in FAM-style destination events that lean into their community-minded efforts.

## OBJECTIVES

- Be the region’s “storyteller.”
- Position the Hershey Harrisburg Region as an overnight getaway destination in key drive markets.
- Increase social media reach, followers, and engagement across VHH channels.
- Increase content diversity.

**USER GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)** is increasingly showcased by DMOs and individual businesses to highlight authentic and real-time traveler experiences.



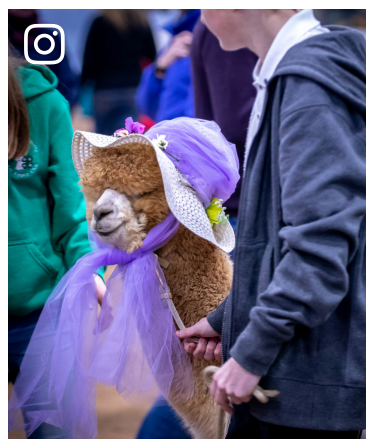
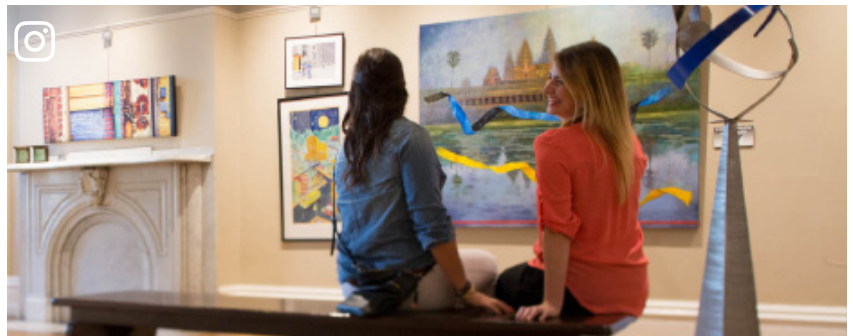
**STRATEGIES**

- Develop an engaging Getaway Guide, e-newsletter, website and social copy to showcase the region’s diverse tourism assets.
- Support well-performing organic content with sponsored social media posts.
- Maintain a Content Calendar to inform areas of asset needs, content themes, and multi-platform deployment schedules.
- **Leverage Organic User Generated Content (UGC via Crowdriff) to:**
  - Offer an authentic, unbiased view of the destination from the visitors’ lens.
  - Organically supplement and diversify the VHH photo and video content library.
  - Maximize on the currency of “now” by showcasing current/recent visitors’ experiences.
- **Leverage Content Collaborator Programs to:**
  - Maximize content reach and engagement to new and existing audiences.
  - Highlight experiences from a diverse array of engaged travelers.
  - Strategically supplement VHH content collection efforts.
- Explore opportunities to host a collective content collaborator FAM-style event.
- Coordinate site visits for VHH staff and content creators to collect new content for social implementation.
- Tag and collaborate with Partners for social media posts to amplify events and experiences.
- Research emerging social media platforms and trends such as the growth of AI (artificial intelligence) and its impact on content generation.
- Explore opportunities for seasonal or themed contests and giveaways.
- Maximize social media reach by repurposing existing static and video content to fit available placements including traditional timeline posts, stories, and reels.
- Incorporate short format video (vertical, 1:1, and 4:5 aspect ratio placements) with increased frequency into the social media calendar.

**ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES**

**Trade Shows & Educational Conferences**

- Content Marketing World
- Social Media Marketing World



# EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

## CURRENT PROGRAMS



## POTENTIAL NEW PROGRAMS



Culinary Tours



Historic Walking Tour



Seasonally-themed limited-time challenges  
(Halloween, winter, etc)



Brew Barons 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration



### TRENDS

- Visitors are seeking authenticity in their travel experiences.
- A wide variety of engagement choices are a key component to meeting the needs of families and groups with different interests.
- Our region’s wealth of culture, art, and historical sites continue to appeal to both young and seasoned travel demographics.
- Outdoor experiences continue to grow in interest and variety.
- Interactive, personalized experiences are a growing expectation in travel.
- Travelers are very intentional about spending locally and supporting independent businesses.

### OBJECTIVES

- Fine-tune the outreach/communication strategy to send push notifications, texts, and e-mails to users who signed up but have not checked in.
- Utilize in-app messaging as a cost-free method to communicate new features, venues, and upcoming events.
- Maintain good relationships with existing venues and communicate the value that we’re bringing to them in terms of marketing awareness, customer check-ins, and brand exposure.
- Continue to research trends in the industry and adapt to the changing visitor preferences.
- Collaborate with Marketing to develop collateral materials supporting Experience Development.
- Research new digital, interactive technologies as well as updates to current platforms.
- Create and maintain relationships with other DMOs to identify new programs, trends, and technologies.

### GOALS

- INCREASE VISITOR ENGAGEMENT ACROSS ALL EXPERIENCES.
- INCREASE NEW BEER TRAIL APP DOWNLOADS.
- GROW EACH TRAIL’S USERBASE BY 10% OR MORE.
- INCREASE SIGN-UP TO ACTIVATION (CHECK INS) RATIO ON ALL INTERACTIVE PROGRAMS.
- RETAIN EXISTING, AND RECRUIT NEW BUSINESSES TO PARTICIPATE IN VHH EXPERIENCE TRAILS.

### STRATEGIES

- Optimize sponsorship engagement at live events to promote VHH trails and experiences.
- Identify and engage with key stakeholders to enhance trails and experiences.
- Identify and incorporate new assets in order to enhance existing programs.
- Enhance technical and experiential knowledge by researching, communicating with, and visiting other destinations to engage with their programs and inform future VHH programming.
- Raise awareness of key long-term programs such as the Brew Barons Beer Trail 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

# PARTNERSHIP

## TRENDS

- DMOs are developing relationships beyond traditional hospitality businesses by connecting with community and corporate organizations in other industries.
- DMOs are addressing a broader spectrum of hospitality and tourism needs of Partners such as attracting and retaining workforce.
- DMOs are sharing knowledge and best practices to improve overall destination marketing efforts.

## STRATEGIES

- Maintain VHH current Partnership base through ongoing engagement, including education and events, and persistent promotion of the benefits of Partnership.
- Continue to identify local business prospects with diverse offerings to strengthen the regions value to a broader audience.
- Strengthen connections with County and State agencies who impact tourism.
- Leverage assets from other VHH departments to attract and onboard new Partners.
- Collaborate with local community organizations to enhance visibility.
- Increase awareness of the value of new Partner exclusive programs and benefits, including Savings Pass and Hospitality Jobs Board.
- Position our destination as inclusive and welcoming to all visitors.
- Evaluate and expand current Partnership funding sources.

## GOALS

- **RETAIN 90% OF EXISTING HOSPITALITY PARTNERS.**
- **INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES AND ATTRACTIONS BY 20%.**
- **POSITION VHH AS AN EXTENSION OF MARKETING AND SALES ENDEAVORS FOR BUSINESSES IN THE LOCAL TOURISM INDUSTRY.**

## TACTICS

- Plan and execute a robust calendar of educational and networking events.
- Highlight the value VHH and HHSE Sales teams add to Partnership benefits by collaborating on joint visits to select prospects.
- Increase Partner and prospect site visits.
- Attend educational conferences to expand industry knowledge and identify emerging trends.
- Maximize opportunities to engage with potential prospects at local events.
- Coordinate with internal teams to identify new potential leads.



## BUILD UPON THE DESTINATION ALIGNMENT STRATEGY

### STRATEGIES

- Implement the DA strategy and messaging into the VHH partnership plan to foster and build unique relationships with community and corporate organizations beyond the traditional hospitality businesses.
- Educate and energize stakeholders to embrace and share the core messaging of the Destination Alignment initiative.

### TACTICS

- Share the Destination Alignment Toolkit with key industry sectors in Dauphin County and identify areas of need within these sectors.
- Explore strategies that VHH can implement to assist industry sectors with these areas of need.

### GOAL

- POSITION VHH AS DAUPHIN COUNTY'S AMBASSADOR TO, AND REGION-WIDE COORDINATOR FOR, VHH-LED DESTINATION ALIGNMENT INITIATIVES.

### INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION

- Foster B2B relationships with industry partners.
- Serve on the board and membership committee of the central chapter of PRLA



# SALES

The Sales Department is responsible for promoting the Hershey Harrisburg Region as a welcoming destination and environment to the travel trade to host their diverse audiences and to serve as a conduit to facilitate client – partner sales opportunities.

### TARGET MARKETS



Meetings & Conventions/  
SMERF



Tour & Travel/  
International



## MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS/SMERF

**State of the Market:** Meeting planners are optimistic about 2024 and beyond with booking windows lengthening. Challenges include higher prices and inexperienced venue staff and planners. Planners feel pressure to deliver high-quality events and game-changing experiences with limited resources.



### TRENDS & FORECAST

- The top three concerns for planners are “Higher Costs of Goods and Services, Budget Constraints and Airline Pricing” followed by service levels and venue availability.
- Planners are looking more to second and third-tier destinations, as well as unique venues and unconventional options to help compensate for continued cost increases with F&B and A/V.
- Average number of nights for a meeting/ event are expected to fall to help save on overall costs.
- 89% of events are now fully in-person.
- Planners are focusing on wellness and Bleisure/blended travel.

### OBJECTIVES

- Increase total room nights booked.
- Increase room night leads distributed.
- Strengthen relationships with meeting planners to understand and meet expectations.
- Continue to provide opportunities for partners to connect with planners.
- Promote unique selling attributes to reach a broader mix of planners including our bleisure activities and diversity and inclusion efforts.
- Attract diverse meetings to our region.

### KEY TARGET MARKETS

- Association
- Corporate
- SMERF





## MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS/SMERF *continued*

### STRATEGIES

- Continue to capitalize on trending destination strengths by promoting the popularity of second tier destination appeal and Bleisure travel.
- Leverage our region’s priority economic sectors to generate business events through regular discussions and collaboration with the Chamber and DCED.
- Continue targeted trade show attendance, association and chapter meeting attendance, hosting client site tours and client events.
- Conduct research on how other destinations are leveraging and carrying out incentive programs.
- Demonstrate VHH’s commitment to Diversity & Inclusion by conducting research to determine expectations for what is necessary to become competitive in attracting diverse meetings and audiences.

### GOALS

- INCREASE PLANNER SITE-VISITS AND FAMS INTO DESTINATION TO SHOWCASE OPPORTUNITIES IN-PERSON.
- INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH MEETING PLANNERS BOTH IN-DESTINATION AND OUT OF MARKET.
- INCREASE ROOM NIGHT BOOKINGS BY 10% YOY.

### PROPOSED TRADE SHOW SCHEDULE

- PCMA Philadelphia Tradeshow
- Express Association Conference
- Destination East
- MPI Middle PA Monthly Events
- Connect DC
- PASAE Annual Expo
- HelmsBriscoe
- CVent Connect

## GROUP TOUR

### State of the Dauphin County Market

**Domestic Group Tour:** According to the ABA, nearly \$214.90 million in total economic activity in Dauphin County can be attributed to the motorcoach group tourism industry.



**306,892**  
MOTORCOACH  
DAY TRIP  
VISITORS



**225,619**  
OVERNIGHT  
VISITORS



TOTAL OF  
**532,511**  
GROUP TOUR  
VISITORS

### FORECASTS/TRENDS

- 75% of NTA tour operators reported they finished 2023 the same or better than 2019.
- SYTA operators reported reaching 138% of their 2019 volume last year and are anticipating a moderate increase in 2024.
- Elevated hotel rates with limited supply is top challenge followed by perceived safety issues, inflation, staffing and unfavorable hotel terms.



### TARGET MARKETS

- Motorcoach operators
- Tour operators
- International inbound receptive operators
- International tour operators

### PROPOSED TRADE SHOW SCHEDULE

- SYTA
- NTA
- ABA
- IPW
- IITA
- Brand USA Sales Mission

## INTERNATIONAL

Dauphin County International Consumer Visa Spending numbers from our Top 10 markets continues to steadily rise. 2023 spending is up 18% from 2019 spending (our highest pre-pandemic number).



### FORECAST/TRENDS

Indian travelers are leading the international market for intent to travel in 2024 with 82% indicating they intend to travel overseas. India became the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest overseas traveler market to Pennsylvania in 2023 (after the UK at #1).

- Visitation from **Europe and the Americas** to the U.S. has received a fast and solid growth from these traditional markets and has already exceeded pre-pandemic levels\*.
- The **Middle East and Asia** continue to lag with visits from China and Japan at half of 2019 levels. These markets are predicted to fully recover in late 2025\*.

\*Source: National Travel and Tourism Office

## INTERNATIONAL *continued*

### OBJECTIVES:

- Maintain active presence at key industry trade shows and marketplaces.
- Stay abreast of industry trends.
- Build group and FIT room nights.
- Showcase the destination during unique opportunities.
- Maximize resources and opportunities created through PA Tourism Office grant funding.

### STRATEGIES:

- Support the key domestic and receptive tour operator partners that feature overnight itineraries in the region.
- Strengthen relationships with key domestic and receptive tour operators through trade show meetings, in person sales calls and client events.
- Participate in client events at domestic and international industry trade shows and sales missions.
- Conduct Sales and Marketing efforts by participating in grant-sponsored PA Tourism functions, trade shows and targeted sales missions.

## GOALS/ MEASUREMENT

- Create unique engagement opportunities provided by the ABA BOD Meeting in Hershey and the ABA Marketplace in Philadelphia.
- Expand destination sales and marketing reach through initiatives created by regional and statewide partnerships.
- Increase new opportunities for partner engagement with tour operators and receptive operators both in-destination and out of market.
- Increase room night bookings by 10% YOY.



## STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Visit Hershey & Harrisburg will continue to build on momentum created through collaborations with the PA Tourism Office and neighboring DMOs.

### STRATEGIES

- Capitalize on the American Bus Association (ABA) Board of Directors Meeting (Hershey, September '24) and the ABA Marketplace (Philadelphia, January '25) through sponsored events and post-Marketplace FAM Tours.
- Elevate and expand sales initiatives through increased PA Tourism grant funding to target domestic group tour and international inbound receptive tour operators.
- Support statewide or regional partner initiatives when they align with our markets through active engagement in industry client events, trade show partnerships, sales missions, and trade marketing.
- Build on Keystone Crossroads partnership (collaboratively funded and managed by VHH, Lancaster and Gettysburg) to collectively promote the region to tour planners.
- Utilize a Starr Tours bus wrap to promote the Keystone Crossroads region May-December to drive traffic to the Keystone Crossroads website.

## PENNSYLVANIA THE GREAT AMERICAN GETAWAY





# HERSHEY HARRISBURG

## SPORTS & EVENTS AUTHORITY

The mission of the Hershey Harrisburg Sports & Events Authority is to promote sports tourism and events initiatives in the Hershey Harrisburg Region, to forge mutually beneficial partnerships with new and existing clients, support locally produced events to expand audiences, encourage participation in physical activity and community events as a means to increase overall health and wellness for persons of all ages and abilities, and drive economic development as it relates to sports and events tourism.

TOP 10 EVENTS GENERATED OVER

**\$104.8 million**

IN ECONOMIC IMPACT TO THE  
HERSHEY HARRISBURG REGION

WELCOMED OVER

**300,000**

ATHLETES, FAMILIES  
AND SPECTATORS.

**Overall sport & event room nights annually are just under 100,000.**



### INDUSTRY TRENDS

#### Diversity Matters

- Sports planners are placing more importance on diversity, equity and inclusion when selecting host destinations. Many are giving preference to cities providing a sports environment that is safe, inclusive and free from discrimination, and eliminating those that do not.
- Promote Harrisburg's 100+ rating in the Municipal Equality Index, as scored by the Human Rights Campaign.

#### Emerging Sports

- Pickleball continues to be one of the fastest growing sports. Pickleball-specific facilities have opened their doors in our market in 2024.
- There is an increased interest and growth in the area of female sports.

#### Bid Fees

- More than 80% of destinations nationwide are paying bid fees. The average bid fee funding pool has increased by 50% since 2021.
- Bid fees/financial incentives were the most important factor for when selecting a host destination.



## GOALS

- INCREASE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SPORTS AND EVENTS BUSINESS BY 10% OVER PREVIOUS LEVELS.
- ESTABLISH FIRST-EVER BIG 20 SOFTBALL CLASSIC (TENTATIVE NAME) IN JUNE 2025.
- INCREASE FOLLOWERS, LIKES AND INTERACTIONS ON ALL HHSE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS (INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK, X).
- TARGET TRENDING MARKETS LIKE PICKLEBALL, ESPORTS AND FEMALE-SPECIFIC COMPETITIONS.

## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

- Increase interactions on all social media channels, boosting followers and likes, on HHSE and Big 26 accounts, by consistent posts, effective use of hashtags, engaging with followers and colleagues.
- Utilize our website more effectively to actively promote our client base and stay fresh with new and dynamic content.
- Become more active with press releases, to promote our bookings and our own events, and put ourselves front and center with key stakeholders in our market and with events rights holders and competitive markets nationally.
- Activate unique sponsorships at shows and conferences, shining the spotlight back on our destination, and keeping HHSE visible to event promoters.



## SALES STRATEGIES

- Continue to leverage our PA Sports membership and capitalize on the 20th anniversary of PA Sports, which will continue to be promoted through the first half of the new fiscal year.
- Foster and expand current relationships with key national governing bodies of sport, i.e. USA Hockey and US Figure Skating.
- Development of our second owned-event, Big 20 Softball, that will provide an opportunity for increased visibility of HHSE to the local community.
- Research and evaluate potential international sports events opportunities. Prospect strategically by attending tradeshows, reviewing event databases and industry publications.
- Continue to increase our role in destination and product development, i.e. pickleball venue and SwimHershey facility.
- Promote the savings pass program to existing clients to help grow key events.
- Increase the budget line item for Bid Fees, to meet study results showing that as the most important factor for rights holders when selecting a host destination.

## TRADE SHOWS/CONFERENCES

- TEAMS Conference
- SPORTS Relationship Conference
- Sports ETA 4S Summit
- Sports Express Conference
- Sports ETA Women's Summit
- Sports ETA Symposium
- Esports Travel Summit

## BIG 26 BASEBALL CLASSIC

The Big 26 Baseball Classic is an annual all-star event featuring high school athletes from Pennsylvania and Maryland. The event also features the Buddy Program to include and uplift special needs athletes.

Big 26 continues to build on strong relationships with national brands like Marucci Sports and Gatorade in efforts to provide the student-athletes with a collegiate and minor league baseball atmosphere.

### Big 26 Goals

- Continue to increase participation in tryouts for the 2025 event through past players, college coaches, and high school coaches' testimonials, and promotion.
- Utilize social media to increase participation in tryouts, reach untapped markets, promote sponsors and increase overall visibility of the buddy program and games.
- Add element of an appearance/talk by a former MLB player, to provide added value and deliver appropriate message to the high school players.
- Continue to explore revenue sources that will further grow the event.



**2024 EVENT: JULY 25-28  
FNB FIELD ON CITY ISLAND**



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