

Business Plan

FISCAL YEAR
2025-26



Together in Tourism

Friends in Tourism,

We have the honor of working in an industry that fuels economies, strengthens communities, and connects people to new places and to each other. We have the thrill of working in a destination flush with authentic experiences, passionate partners, and stories worth telling. And we have the great responsibility of not just maintaining the success of local tourism but of moving it forward through thoughtful planning and a commitment to collaboration.

As we look ahead to FY25-26, Visit Hershey & Harrisburg is focused on strategic and creative efforts that continue to position our region as a must-visit destination. We don't do this work alone. This Business Plan is guided by data, powered by partnerships, and driven by the belief that tourism is not just something we promote. It's something we build TOGETHER.

The Hershey Harrisburg Region, home to PA's vibrant state capital, Hershey's iconic attractions, historic landmarks, beautiful outdoor spaces, versatile venues, and a thriving arts, culture, and culinary landscape, is a destination filled with immersive experiences that drive the success of local tourism. Our team is excited to share goals and strategies that reflect our commitment to showcase these destination treasures across all audiences.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sharon S. Myers".

Sharon S. Myers
PRESIDENT & CEO
Visit Hershey & Harrisburg



Who We Are

Visit Hershey & Harrisburg (VHH) is the official non-profit partnership-based Destination Marketing Organization serving Dauphin and Perry Counties. Visit Hershey & Harrisburg is responsible for developing and executing comprehensive sales, marketing, and communication programs to compete for leisure, business, group, and sporting event travel market segments among leading and national destinations. VHH divisions include Hershey Harrisburg Sports & Events Authority and ExploreHBG.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Visit Hershey & Harrisburg is to generate economic growth and stability through the marketing and promotion of travel to the Hershey Harrisburg region and to coalesce, develop, and expand its hospitality industry, products, and workforce.

OUR IMPACT

Our industry creates moments, memories, and momentum for everyone it touches. While tourism's impact goes far beyond the numbers, the numbers do tell a powerful story. Millions of visitors to our region each year bring not only a sense of adventure but also critical revenue that supports small businesses, sustains jobs, and funds essential services.

TOURISM IN DAUPHIN COUNTY

\$4.1 BILLION
TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$276.3 Million
State & Local Taxes

27,068
Jobs Supported

Direct Visitor Spending in Dauphin County ranks in the Top 5 Destination Marketing regions in PA.

*Source: 2023 Tourism Economics Report prepared for VisitPA



Marketing

Marketing efforts drive visitation by generating awareness of the Hershey Harrisburg Region to target audiences in local and outer markets. Efforts support all VHH department activities by developing creative assets that highlight the wealth of diverse experiences visitors can expect in our region. Creative campaigns, website content, and sales materials are designed to showcase iconic attractions, cultural experiences, and local charm.

GOALS

- Increase year-over-year visitation by 3%.
- Increase year-over-year website active users by 5%.
- Increase quantity of video production (including leisure, sales, partnership assets) by 40% over the past three-year average (11.5).

STRATEGIES

- Employ a mix of digital campaigns and paid search.
- Pursue an initiative to increase exposure and awareness beyond our traditional markets to an international audience at the World Cup competition in Philadelphia.
- Broaden the scope of in-house and contracted video production.

TACTICS

- Monitor VisaVue data from primary advertising markets on a quarterly basis.
- Adjust advertising spend based on trends reflected in VisaVue reports.
- Develop an OOH plan specific to generate exposure to attendees in the region for the World Cup competition in Philadelphia.
- Plan thematic series of videos relevant to content initiatives.

- Re-evaluate our paid media mix with a higher focus on tactics that are more efficient in driving website traffic.
- Develop additional video content in the form of highlight reels for use in social and website content.



Communications & Content



Communications & Content efforts are focused on inspiring travel to the Hershey Harrisburg Region through curated storytelling and elevating awareness of destination marketing efforts to the appropriate community stakeholders, media and local government.

COMMUNICATIONS (PUBLIC RELATIONS)

GOALS

- Position Visit Hershey & Harrisburg as the expert resource for travel & tourism information across media and industry audiences.
- Increase regional, national, and niche-market awareness of the Hershey Harrisburg Region as a top-tier travel destination.
- Strengthen community stakeholder and media relations.
- Promote year-round tourism with a focus on shoulder season visitation.

STRATEGIES

- Leverage earned media and influencer relationships.
- Align PR messaging with key seasonal motivators and events.
- Activate local ambassadors.

TACTICS

- Host media familiarization (FAM) tours with curated itineraries highlighting food, history, family attractions, and seasonal offerings.
- Refresh the destination media kit and online pressroom with high-res imagery, story angles, press releases, and facts.
- Pitch story angles tailored to niche publications (e.g., family travel, craft beer, wellness, Black history, LGBTQ+ travel).
- 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.
- Research and implement a media monitoring tool to track coverage and sentiment.
- Attend the Mid-Atlantic Travel PR Alliance annual Media Marketplace.



Partner with travel influencers for authentic, itinerary-based coverage via social media, blogs, or YouTube.



Pre-package relevant images, videos, and VHH leadership interviews for media use and reference.



Launch a quarterly newsletter to community stakeholders and local government.



CONTENT

GOALS

- Improve organic and AI search.
- Publish a minimum of six new Partner spotlight pages.
- Publish at least ten new VHH blog entries showcasing upcoming events, openings, or seasonal offerings.
- Increase social media content (posts) and engagement (comments, shares, etc.) by 10% on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and TikTok.

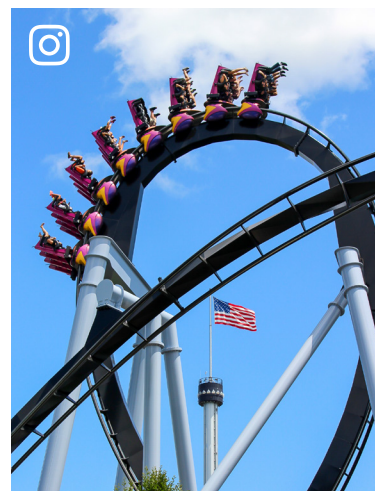
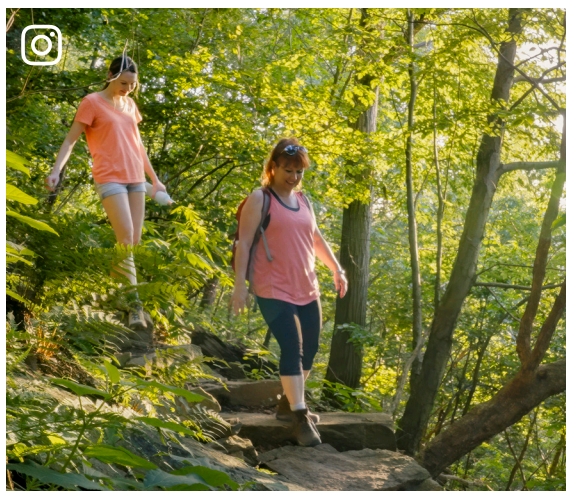


CONTENT STRATEGIES

- Actively maintain a content calendar aligned with key campaigns.
- Determine content themes based on travel trends and high-performing past content.
- Diversify content formats including photos, videos and itineraries.
- Ensure content is representative of diverse audiences.
- Segment content to target audiences.
- Ensure consistency in tone, style, and storytelling across all platforms.

CONTENT TACTICS

- Maintain a blog tied to SEO keywords, rich media, and seasonal topics.
- Create themed itineraries.
- Refresh older high-traffic posts.
- Use social media platforms to maximize reach of website content.



Experience Development

The Experience Development department designs, curates, and promotes compelling visitor experiences that encourage deeper exploration and longer stays in our region. This is done through collaboration with local partners to highlight existing assets with themed trails, seasonal passports, and immersive programs that align with traveler interests and market trends. The mission is to increase economic impact through elevated storytelling, regional connectivity, and innovative programming.

CURRENT PROGRAMS



PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Program development for FY25-26 will lean into growing trends in visitor activities and interests. Building on the continued interest from guests looking for ways to enjoy outdoor experiences, program research will focus on outdoor recreation activities. With the rise in popularity for agritourism, we'll explore opportunities that help visitors make concrete connections between the foods they love and the places where foods are grown. We'll also continue to develop and showcase the many options for recreation and personal wellness in the region.

GOALS

- Increase YOY engagement with each individual Trail and Experience (apps and web showcases) by 20%.
- Increase the YOY ratio of downloads/sign ups to Activated Users by 15%.
- Increase YOY live event check-ins by 20%.
- Increase YOY Experience Development revenue by 15%.
- Build two new interactive Trails.

STRATEGIES

- Create a comprehensive Trails & Experiences platform to house new interactive Trails that promote shorter-term and targeted experiences based on seasonal visitation.
- Encourage Trails & Experiences stakeholders to promote through their owned channels.
- Update the incentives and prizes of new and existing programs to maximize audience appeal and streamline the incentive process to reduce costs for creation, storage, and delivery.
- Leverage new data sources (Placer.ai, etc.) to better track consumer habits and inform enhancements of new and existing experiences.

TACTICS

- Identify and connect with at least 10 new businesses/sites for each new themed trail or experience.
- Conduct stakeholder engagement sessions to co-develop and promote new ideas for Trail enhancement and promotion.
- Launch a Trails & Experiences platform with a clear strategy of both revolving and evergreen content to keep experiences fresh and the user experience positive and meaningful.
- Develop a virtual storefront for customization and streamlined check-out of prizes and apparel.
- Audit the public-facing information of all Trails & Experiences seasonally and annually to ensure that information is up to date.



Partnership

Partnership efforts are dedicated to fostering a dynamic and mutually beneficial network of tourism and hospitality stakeholders in our region. Strategic collaborations are foundational to strengthening our region’s brand and ensuring long-term industry vitality.

STRATEGIES

- Target untapped and emerging business segments.
- Assess pricing elasticity and adjust tiered pricing levels to better align with the value of Partnership.
- Leverage strategic collaboration and events.
- Strengthen outreach and lead generation efforts.
- Celebrate Partner success and loyalty.
- Optimize relevance and value of Partner events.
- Refine the Partnership value proposition.
- Incentivize and recognize active Partner participation.

TACTICS

- Conduct analysis to update pricing and benefits for membership tiers.
- Identify new tourism related businesses in the region.
- Collaborate with Experience Development to look at trail participants for potential Partner leads.
- Expand the footprint of businesses to target for Partnership.
- Create a follow up communication mailer to reinforce prospect visits.
- Offer a referral program rewarding current partners for bringing in new partners.
- Attend local business events, chamber meetings, and trade associations to identify and target potential new Partners.

GOALS

- Increase the revenue generated by the Partnership department by 20%.
- Expand and diversify our Partnership network increasing new Partnerships by 15%.
- Achieve a Partner retention rate of 90%.



Develop a Partner events calendar and promote it consistently.



Highlight active Partner success stories to demonstrate value.



SALES

Sales efforts promote the region as a central, premier destination for group travel across key market segments, including Meetings & Conventions, SMERF, Domestic Group Tour, and International Travel. Sales drives economic impact by attracting group travelers, facilitating business connections between clients and local partners, and delivering exceptional client support.

TARGET MARKETS



Meetings &
Conventions/
SMERF



Tour & Travel/
International



MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS/SMERF

GOALS

- Increase booked room nights and lead room nights by 10% over FY24-25.
- Host at least 12 in-person site visits or FAMs by June 2026.
- Increase partner engagement opportunities with meeting planners by 30%.
- Maintain an appropriate balance of attendance between regional or industry events (MPI, PASAE, PCMA, etc.) and national trade shows to strengthen visibility and nurture planner relationships.



STRATEGIES

- Enhance the quality and personalization of lead follow-up by targeting high-potential prospects, emphasizing our destination's unique advantages, and providing timely, solutions-focused communication that supports planner confidence and decision-making.
- Increase destination exposure by creating more opportunities for planners to experience Hershey & Harrisburg first-hand, using both individual site-visits and curated FAMs to convert interest into definite bookings.
- Facilitate meaningful, face-to-face interactions between planners and our partners through strategically timed, co-hosted events and outreach.
- Grow planner trust and brand recall by increasing visibility in spaces where planners are learning, networking and sourcing, establishing VHH as a knowledgeable, reliable and approachable resource.



MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS/SMERF *CONTINUED*



TACTICS

- Streamline and personalize the lead follow-up process to ensure consistency in communication timelines.
- Create a standardized response for lost business that includes a survey to capture feedback and uncover decision-making trends.
- Identify repeat or rebook opportunities from past clients and initiate outreach with updated information and marketing offerings.
- Utilize the MINT+ database to research meetings held in comparable second-tier destinations and identify new, qualified prospects.
- Develop an incentive program (to be launched in 2026) focused on attracting multi-day meetings and filling need periods through value-added offerings.
- Modify Cvent tactics with a focus on what is producing greatest ROI.
- Focus on opportunities for city-wide RFPs.
- Review CRM and lead history to identify high-potential prospects including planners who previously submitted RFPs and expressed interest in the destination.
- Engage third-party and independent planners by offering dedicated site visits to introduce the region and foster future bookings.
- Continue legacy events Mingle & Jingle and the Philadelphia meeting planner event with refreshed themes, interactive elements and strong partner visibility.
- Organize two sales blitzes with partners, including a targeted outreach effort in the Washington, D.C. market that incorporates a partner-hosted networking event for planners.
- Leverage planner databases and association member lists to proactively identify and reach out to early-career planners and those sourcing second-tier destinations.
- Attend monthly MPI Middle PA events when appropriate and at least 2 cross-market MPI Chapter functions (Philadelphia & Potomac chapters).
- Participate in PASAE events open to suppliers, including the Connections Conference and roundtable sessions.
- Attend key national and regional tradeshows to strengthen brand visibility, generate qualified leads and reinforce our presence in the meetings industry.



Host one in-destination FAM tour featuring immersive experiences with partner properties and venues.



Serve on committees and volunteer for panel discussions to boost visibility and reinforce destination leadership.



Launch a targeted LinkedIn outreach campaign to identify Mid-Atlantic planners and offer a “Bring a Colleague” perk.

GROUP TOUR/INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

GOALS

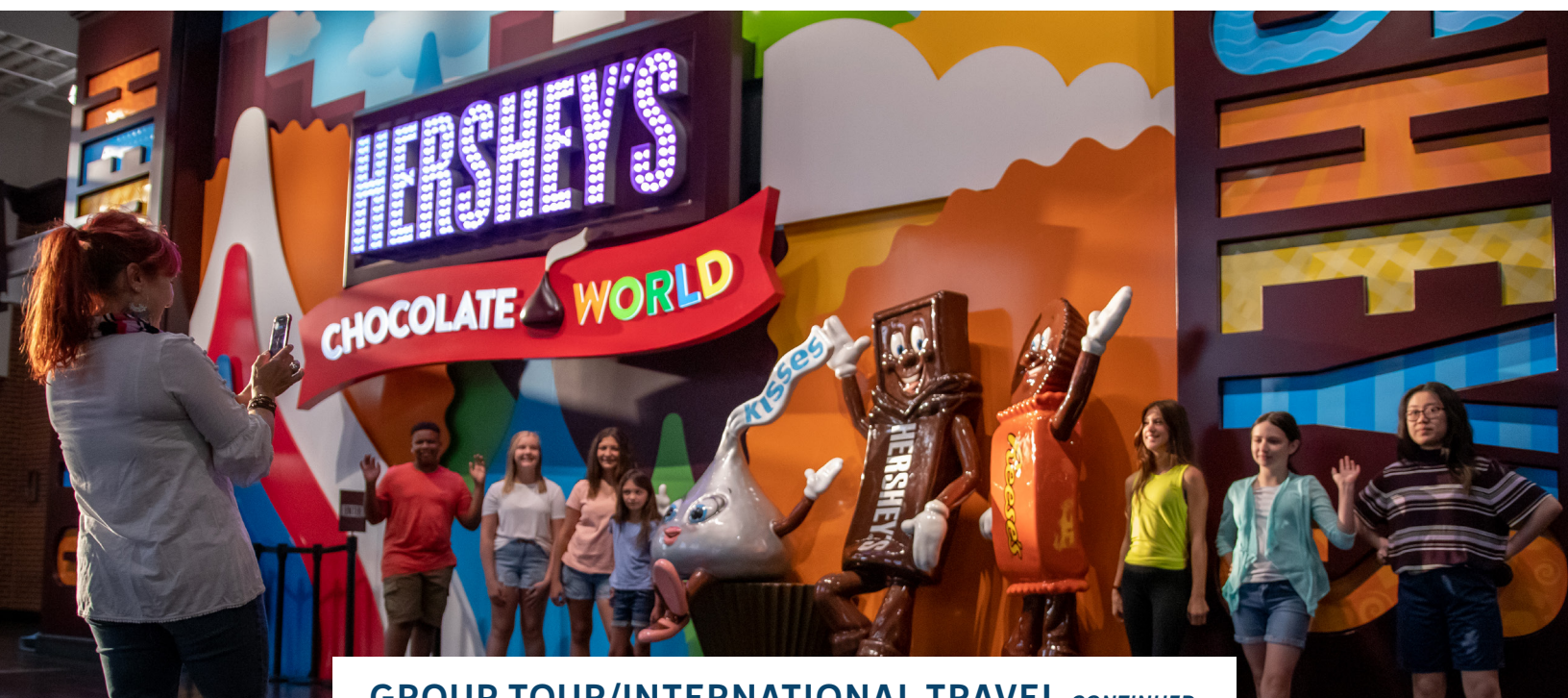
- Create and distribute customizable group itineraries.
- Increase partner engagement opportunities with tour operators by 50%.
- Increase international spending from India by 10%.
- Maintain an active presence with key industry stakeholders to strengthen visibility and nurture relationships.



STRATEGIES

- Work with state and local partners to create a variety of themed and regional itineraries that will appeal to various markets.
- Leverage India's booming outbound travel through targeted partnerships.
- Foster stronger partnerships between group tour and international receptive operators and local tourism partners.
- Build upon existing relationships and create new contacts during business sessions at industry trade shows and training opportunities created during sales missions at tour operator offices and businesses.





GROUP TOUR/INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL *CONTINUED*

TACTICS

- Create education-based itineraries ahead of the SYTA trade show in August that highlight education programming, safety standards in combination with popular group tour attractions.
- Maximize tourism grant-funded consulting agreement creating statewide regional and themed itineraries that will be promoted collectively by DMOs and on Visit PA.
- Translate PDF itineraries into languages from key markets (German, French, Spanish)
- Distribute applicable itineraries targeting potential international visitors coming to the area for FIFA games and Fan Zones and America 250.
- Launch a targeted social media campaign through Brand USA highlighting regional itineraries and international packages.
- Collaborate with targeted Indian tour operators to create new or enhance existing product offerings.
- Offer virtual online training for Indian travel agents through key tour operator partnerships and Brand USA India opportunities.
- Support key tour operators with marketing assistance and advertising.
- Attend Brand USA India mission.
- Increase visibility for partners by facilitating opportunities to engage with travel trade at sales missions and trade events and by maximizing participation in statewide networking events and sponsorships.
- Host individual and group FAM tours that connect our local suppliers with the travel trade.
- Maximize statewide sales mission opportunities made possible through tourism grant funding.
- Attend trade shows and marketplaces that provide the opportunity to meet with key industry tour planners.
- Promote our destination's affordability, sense of welcome, and family-friendly attractions to our neighbors in Canada, the #1 source for inbound tourism that has been vulnerable to a weak currency exchange and uncertainty in trade policy.

PROPOSED INDUSTRY EVENTS

IPW, SYTA, NTA, ABA, RTO Missions, Domestic Sales Mission and Brand USA events

(subject to change)



The mission of the Hershey Harrisburg Sports & Events Authority (HHSE), a division of Visit Hershey & Harrisburg, 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.

GOALS

- Increase year-over-year room nights booked by 10%.
- Increase year-over-year economic impact of sports and events business by 10%.
- Increase reach of HHSE and Big 26 Baseball social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, X) by 10%.
- Identify and engage with five potential clients in emerging and trending markets such as adventure/ extreme sports and female-specific competitions.
- Generate a minimum of five leads from non-sporting events.

STRATEGIES

- Continue to leverage our PA Sports membership by maximizing our reach to potential clients, through opportunities available with the statewide coalition.
- Develop a plan to entice national governing bodies of sports and events associated with upcoming Olympics and World Cup in the USA to consider the Hershey Harrisburg region, prior to 2028 Olympics and 2026 World Cup.
- Explore potential international sports events opportunities tied to 2026 World Cup and 2028 Olympics. Utilize contacts from TEAMS Europe to evaluate potential business.
- Maintain active role in development of Hershey swim facility and prepare bids for events that would immediately be interested in that facility when it comes online.
- Increase Bid Fees budget to meet rising demands of rights holders and attract new events.
- Utilize increased Marketing Collateral funds to ensure we meet or exceed clients' expectations.
- Increase lead room nights distributed by 10%.
- Continue to develop relationships with media outlets as we promote our bookings and our own events to keep HHSE relevant with key stakeholders, events rights holders and competitive markets nationally.



TACTICS

- Identify and engage with decision makers for national events to understand event timing, specifications, criteria, and expectations.
- Develop a 5-year strategic plan to project Bid Fees needs/strategy.
- Increase site visits from 11 to 13.
- Engage with sports content creators on social media platforms and utilize personal outreach to local traditional sports media outlets.
- Utilize marketing and sponsorship opportunities to leverage HHSE's 10th anniversary as a vehicle for brand awareness across the industry.

Develop a plan for a Sales mission to Colorado Springs, home to the bulk of national sports organizations.



PROJECTED TRADE SHOW SCHEDULE

- **SPORTS Relationship Conference**
September 8-11, 2025 Columbia, SC
- **NCAA Event Hosting Seminar**
September 14, 2025 Indianapolis, IN
- **Sports ETA 4S Summit**
September 23-25, 2025 Annapolis, MD
- **TEAMS Conference**
October 13-16, 2025 Columbus, OH
- **Sports Express Conference**
January 12-16, 2026 Fort Myers, FL
- **SportsETA Chief Executive Summit**
January 26-28, 2026 Columbus, OH
- **TEAMS Europe**
March 17-19, 2026 Birmingham, England
- **Sports ETA Women's Summit**
April 1-3, 2026 Phoenix, AZ
- **Sports ETA Symposium**
April 21-23, 2026 Las Vegas, NV
- **Esports Travel Summit**
June 23-25, 2026 Cincinnati, OH



Explore HBG.



ExploreHBG, a division of Visit Hershey & Harrisburg, is dedicated to promoting the City of Harrisburg as a vibrant tourism destination by leveraging strategic marketing, compelling content, public relations, and partnerships. ExploreHBG strives to increase tourism-related engagement by showcasing the city's special events, attractions, businesses, and diverse cultural landscape.

GOALS

- Increase year-over-year website sessions by 7-10%.
- Grow newsletter subscribers from 1,000 to 1,500.
- Increase organic social media engagement by 10% through video-first content.
- Boost seasonal campaign performance by increasing Google ads sessions by 5-7% YoY, Meta link clicks by 8-12% and OTT impressions by up to 5%.
- Strengthen community ties by supporting both legacy and grassroots events through sponsorships and partnerships.



STRATEGIES

- Elevate Harrisburg's visibility through high-quality, SEO-driven website content and blog posts.
- Enhance email marketing through tailored content and consistent list-building efforts.
- Continue to grow digital audience reach with video-first social content and cross-channel promotions.
- Execute targeted seasonal marketing campaigns with optimized paid media spend.
- Strengthen strategic partnerships that amplify ExploreHBG's presence across the region.

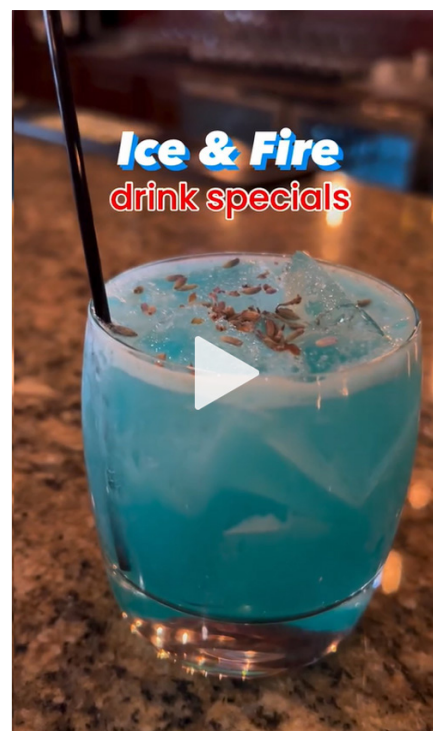
TACTICS

- Promote the monthly newsletter via social media, key website placements and soliciting subscribers at events.
- Produce at least two short-form videos per week for Instagram and TikTok and launch Instagram takeovers and share “stories” during major events (e.g., Artsfest, Kipona) to offer real-time behind-the-scenes views.
- Run seasonal video ads on OTT platforms and place rotating billboards in high-traffic HLLY DMA locations to reach family and leisure travelers across multiple touchpoints.
- Partner with local organizations to cross-promote events and initiatives while maintaining brand visibility through engaging promotional items at city events and pop-ups.



Refresh seasonal website landing pages with new imagery, update event listings, and user-centric content. Ensure alt and meta descriptions are clear and concise.

Publish at least two blog posts per month focused on seasonal activities, events and diverse perspectives.





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