

explore
LAWRENCE



**STRATEGIC PLAN
2023-2027**

MISSION:

eXplore Lawrence benefits the local economy by attracting diverse visitors, groups, and events to the City.



VISION:

eXplore Lawrence celebrates Lawrence and Douglas County as an unmistakable destination known for its unique identity, inclusive community, and unforgettable visitor experiences.



VALUES

FRIENDLY & INCLUSIVE:

At eXplore Lawrence, we pride ourselves on our hospitality—to visitors and residents alike. eXplore Lawrence is committed to ensuring that all people feel welcome in our community, not regardless of their unique identities but because of them!

AUTHENTIC & DIVERSE:

We're not perfect—we're in progress, and that's part of what makes us unique. At eXplore Lawrence, we celebrate our community's authenticity even as we work towards continuous improvement. eXplore Lawrence strives to represent an array of identities in its staff, board, and partners. We believe diverse perspectives make our work stronger and our community more attractive to all.

PROACTIVE & COLLABORATIVE:

We are proud to partner with the many incredible community attractions, hotels, venues, restaurants, retail establishments, and planners that make Lawrence vibrant. eXplore Lawrence is proactive in meeting our partners' and travelers' needs. We collaborate with governmental, educational, and other community organizations to increase economic development. We keep the welcome mat out for everyone year-round!

GOAL #1

SALES:

eXplore Lawrence measurably increases tourism's economic impact by maximizing hotel occupancy throughout the week; securing group trips that make use of local conference and event space; and leveraging Lawrence's unmistakable visitor attractions and diverse community.



GOAL #1

STRATEGIES:

1. Research other similarly-sized regional communities and university towns to develop a list of association and business prospects potentially interested in holding events in Lawrence on weekdays and non-high-demand weekends.
2. Develop a Lawrence event-organizer services menu, including venue/event accessibility features, to share with potential event hosts that emphasizes the benefits of traveling on weekdays.
3. Reverse prospect group and event sales by leveraging local connections to major industries and associations—including the University of Kansas administration and faculty, Haskell Indian Nations University administration and faculty, Panasonic management and staff, LMH Health administration and practitioners, trade and professional associations, etc.
4. Develop and implement a plan to incentivize group bookings based on the number of hotel bookings and days of stay.
5. Develop and implement an incentive program for individual travelers—especially “bleisure travelers”—that prioritizes weekday hotel stays.
6. Create a passport program specifically for engaging World Cup 2026 fans with local business and nonprofit organizations during their stay.
7. Support eXplore Lawrence staff in attending 1 new tourism conference, trade show, or showcase each year and bringing back at least 5 new leads from each.
8. Feature the Director of Sales as a key community resource and recruit, train, and maintain a full sales team.

GOAL #2

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS:

eXplore Lawrence builds the tourism economy in Lawrence by increasing the number and diversity of visitors through innovative, creative, and welcoming marketing and communications strategies.



GOAL #2

STRATEGIES:

1. Prioritize regional marketing—focus on roadtrippers from major hubs in the Midwest, including but not limited to Wichita, Denver, Chicago, and Dallas and emerging markets including but not limited to Nashville, Omaha, and Springfield.
2. Create a marketing campaign specifically aimed at attracting “bleisure” travelers to Lawrence for business (Sunday-Thursday) and enticing them to lengthen their stay for weekend events.
3. Collaborate with community partners to promote and encourage events designed to lengthen business bookings for one additional weekend night or to lengthen weekend stays for one additional week night.
4. Create itineraries to promote multiple night stays around grassroots Lawrence events created by diverse Lawrence communities, including but not limited to the Haskell Powwow, KU’s Indigenous Cultures Festival, Lawrence Juneteenth Celebration, St. John’s Fiesta, Lawrence Pride, and more.
5. Collaborate with diverse community partners to expand the passport program to focus on getting to know the unmistakable communities of Lawrence.
6. Promote the Lawrence “fan experience” for World Cup 2026 by collaborating with diverse partners and engaging them in cooperative marketing campaigns.
7. Use the new strategic plan to create an advocacy/marketing campaign for eXplore Lawrence itself, helping Lawrence residents and regional partners better understand the work that eXplore Lawrence does as a convention and visitors bureau.

GOAL #3

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

eXplore Lawrence proactively collaborates with diverse community partners, including hotels, meeting venues, attractions, local businesses, universities, and area municipalities, in order to increase tourism to the City of Lawrence.



GOAL #3

STRATEGIES:

1. Expand strategic partnerships with key community organizations, including but not limited to the University of Kansas, Panasonic, transportation providers, and other relevant stakeholders as demonstrated by collaborative projects and shared economy-building initiatives.
2. Reestablish the arts and nonprofit roundtable sessions, including representatives from local attractions, nonprofit organizations, and community events, that meets monthly to discuss city-wide tourism goals and strategies.
3. Attend state legislature sessions and develop relationships with state representatives that can lead to increased group bookings in Lawrence by working closely with the Travel Industry Association of Kansas.
4. Convene an annual summit of tourism industry stakeholders in the region with an attendance of at least 65 in FY 2024 with an annual increase of 10% through FY 2027.
5. Incentivize engagement of hotel industry employees in monthly DOS meetings and quarterly general manager meetings by providing free training on industry best practices, tourism trends, and new local attractions/events.
6. Rebuild and grow the eXplore Lawrence Ambassador Program by creating increased training and incentives for volunteers.
7. Developing a Local Social Media Influencer Program by recruiting social media influencers willing to promote Lawrence in exchange for specialized social media training and tools.
8. Approach the 2026 World Cup as an opportunity to test out new regional partnerships and collaborations while learning how to promote Lawrence as a global tourist destination.

GOAL #4

FUNDING & ADVOCACY:

eXplore Lawrence embraces innovative approaches to developing reliable agency funding streams and collaborates on initiatives designed to increase transient guest tax revenue.



GOAL #4

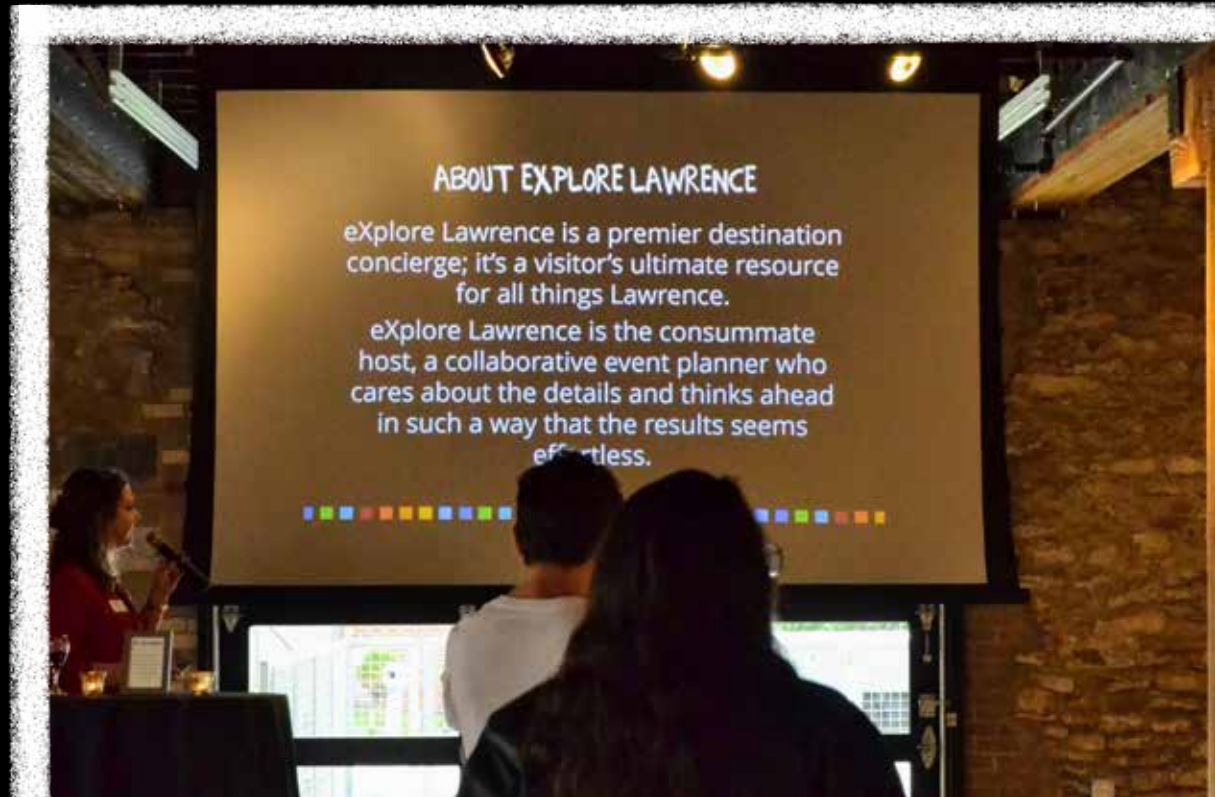
STRATEGIES:

1. Finalize a multi-year funding agreement with the City of Lawrence to guarantee future Transient Guest Tax funding.
2. Identify and implement 1-2 additional revenue streams to diversify income sources—one of which may be the implementation of a Tourism Improvement District to provide additional funding specifically earmarked for sales related marketing.
3. Develop and implement a plan to advocate for better and more transportation solutions in Lawrence, Douglas County, and across the region to support tourism development.
4. Use eXplore Lawrence's 501(c)6 status and the strategic plan marketing campaign to share the role eXplore Lawrence plays in building the local and regional economy with government officials at the City, county, and state levels.

GOAL #5

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH:

eXplore Lawrence has a full complement of staff, including professionals in sales, marketing, and visitor experience, as well as a board of directors that represents the diversity of industries that impact area tourism.



GOAL #5

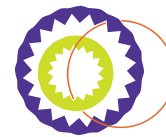
STRATEGIES:

1. Continue to hire new staff as resources grow with the first priority being the expansion of the eXplore Lawrence marketing team.
2. Develop an organizational chart, workflow processes document, and clear job descriptions including year-end assessment goals for eXplore Lawrence staff.
3. Expand eXplore Lawrence governing board from 7 members to 9 and no more than 15 voting members, comprising the following positions: (2) two representatives employed by hotel within the city limits of Lawrence; (1) one representative from the cultural industry in Lawrence; (2) two representatives of a local university or educational institution; (2) two representatives of the sports and/or recreational industry in Lawrence; (1) one representative of a brick and mortar restaurant in Lawrence; (1) one representative from the service/event management industry in Lawrence; up to (6) six representatives of the tourism industry in Lawrence or within Douglas County. Seats should be filled with the goal of increasing board diversity in the areas of race, gender, sexuality, age, disability, and economic status.
4. Develop an eXplore Lawrence advisory board including representatives from diverse local and regional industries that meets bi-annually and that can be called upon by the eXplore Lawrence governing board for expertise and advice. Seats should be filled with the goal of increasing board diversity in the areas of race, gender, sexuality, age, disability, and economic status.
5. Appoint a special standing board committee to oversee World Cup 2026 preparations, programming, promotions, and evaluation.

CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN:



explore
LAWRENCE



Coneflower
CONSULTING