



FY2019 PWCVB Annual Report











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Dear Supporters and Friends,

On behalf of the board of directors and staff of the Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau (PWCVB), we are pleased to present our Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 2019, which ran from July 2018 through June 2019.

We are proud to represent more than 400 partners from throughout the Greater Providence area and to promote a destination that is both well established and ripe with promise. Our organization works on your behalf, selling and marketing Providence, Warwick and all of Rhode Island to meeting and sporting event planners, as well as leisure tourists.

This was a year of great change for the PWCVB, as our longtime President and CEO Martha Sheridan left to pursue other opportunities. With Martha at the helm, the bureau and the destination flourished and we thank her for more than a decade of excellent leadership.

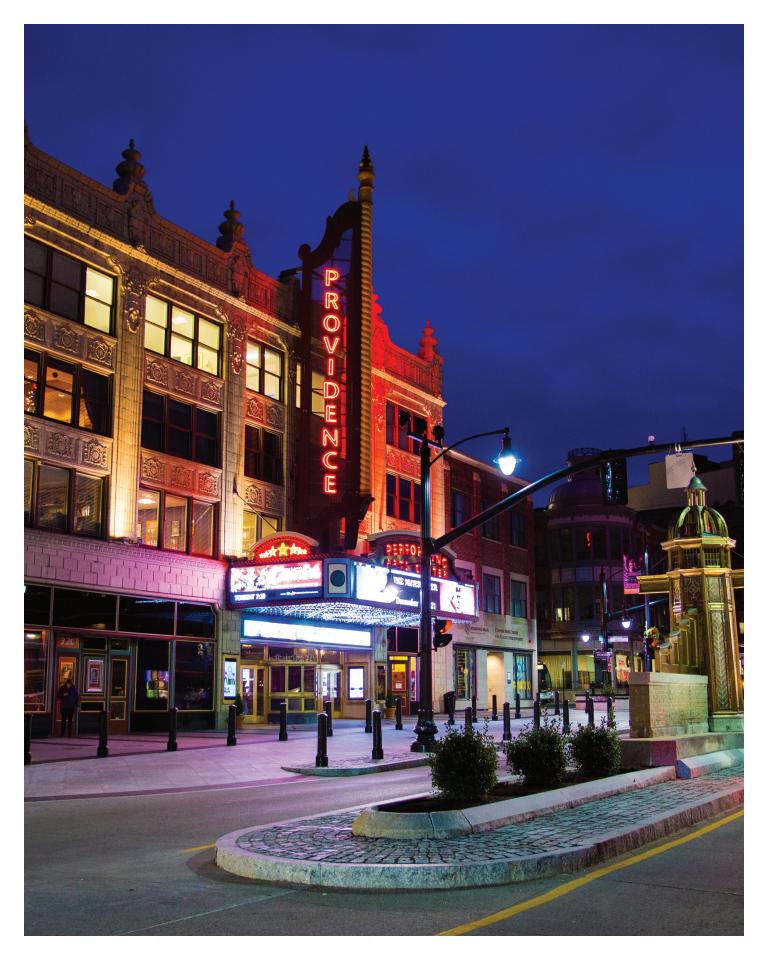
After an extensive nationwide search, Kristen Adamo was named president and CEO. As the former vice president of marketing and communications at the bureau, Kristen blends her destination and institutional knowledge with the fresh perspective that new leadership brings.

In fact, that balance of experience and opportunity was really the hallmark of this past fiscal year. We welcomed new hotels in to the market, while maintaining strong occupancy and rate. New staff and new board members brought different talents and fresh energy to a seasoned group and reinvigorated the way in which we do business. The PWCVB closed out the year proud of its accomplishments and poised for the future.

This report both reflects those past accomplishments and points the way to a bright and prosperous future. FY 19 was a pivotal year in both the evolution of the Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau and in the local tourism industry. We face FY20 with energy and enthusiasm.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Greene Chairperson



Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau

By the Numb3rs FY2019

284 MEETINGS, CONVENTIONS AND SPORTING EVENTS BOOKED FOR FUTURE YEARS

123,132 HOTEL ROOM NIGHTS BOOKED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THOSE EVENTS

\$87M direct spending value of those EVENTS

\$32.6M DIRECT SPENDING OF THE \$87M ON SPORTING EVENTS ALONE 242 MEETINGS, CONVENTION AND SPORTING EVENTS ASSISTED BY THE PWCVB CONVENTION SERVICES TEAM

18 TRADE SHOWS AT WHICH PWCVB REPS PROMOTED PROVIDENCE, WARWICK AND ALL OF RHODE ISLAND

151,677 PEOPLE ENGAGED ON PWCVB FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM CHANNELS

4.2M PAGE VIEWS ON GOPROVIDENCE.COM

83 TRAVEL JOURNALISTS AND INFLUENCERS HOSTED BY THE PWCVB

Marketing & Communications

The PWCVB marketing team serves as an in-house agency for the organization and provides marketing support to its more than 400 partners. Its job is to develop strategies, programs and materials that promote the destination as the premier spot for meetings, conventions, sporting events and leisure travel. The department also includes partnership development and visitor services.

The PWCVB's leisure marketing strategy for FY19 focused on positioning the destination as a preeminent second-tier city with a rich history and a bright future. Working with an even wider swath of community organizations provided the PWCVB with both new newsgathering opportunities and new channels to spread those stories and messages. The PWCVB began building upon its established strengths to discover fresh marketing angles that have revitalized its efforts, in both leisure and meetings marketing.

Advertising

The PWCVB marketing team simultaneously deployed three different advertising campaigns aimed at very distinct markets. Leisure advertising continued to focus on the wide variety of activities the city has to offer, and on the ability to curate one's own experience, using the tagline "Pick Your Providence." The advertising buy focused on the Northeast Corridor and included a partnership with the City of Warwick, enabling the PWCVB to stretch its marketing dollars further.

Meeting and convention advertising reflected the invigorated economic climate and the many development projects occurring in both Providence and Warwick. Bearing the tagline "You Need to Be Here," the ads are part of a strategic advertising buy, which includes print, digital, search engine marketing and key sponsorships.

The final campaign, undertaken for the RI Sports Commission, aimed its messaging at sporting event planners. Because the bulk of large-scale sports events in the state are at the interscholastic level, these ads focused on Rhode Island's dual appeal as a great place to hold an event and to vacation with the family.



MEETINGS CAMPAIGN

LEISURE CAMPAIGN

print



Let's hear it for the INDIVIDUALS carving your own path, CHOOSING YOUR OWN ADVENTURE.

You're our people. After all, Providence, RI was founded on the notion that you should be able to do what you want to do and think what you want to think. We take that to heart.

Bring your family or travel solo. Indulge in delicious meals or bike through cityscapes and scenic vistas. Learn a new kill or toll lacity in a gandola watching the world glide by. Do all of it. Or do your own thing.

We have so much to do, see, eat, play, create, watch — the combinations are endless. **It's up to you.**

PICK YOUR PROVIDENCE



web



Web

The PWCVB continued to refine GoProvidence.com in FY19. The marketing team developed a fully integrated, yearlong calendar of key events, scheduled blog post about those events and promoted the blog content through social media. The team also recruited many "guest bloggers" to write entries and promote them. Popular blog posts included one featuring the much-anticipated release of the WaterFire schedule, with more than 34,000 views, and a post highlighting the Jack-O-Lantern Spectacular's Theme Nights, which topped 24,000 views. Digital advertising was adjusted to reflect current campaigns. All efforts were designed to point back to the website.

The PWCVB's marketing campaigns employ contesting whenever possible, which drives visitors to the website and increases our email database through online entries. Our annual December Gift-A-Day Giveaway featured 24 days of prizes and drove traffic to the site and allowed for visibility for our partners through their prize offerings.

As a result of these strategic and cohesive efforts, GoProvidence.com garnered 1.44 million visits and 4.2 million page views in FY19. Overall visits to the site increased by 3%, with organic visits increasing by 2%. A focus on social media traffic paid off, with a 22% growth for the social channel compared to 3% for 2017-2018.

Social Media

As more people use social media channels for information gathering, the PWCVB continues to develop social media channel-specific content, in addition to its traditional web content. In order to cut through the social media clutter, the PWCVB used a mix of timely posts about current events such as WaterFire or Comic Con, live Facebook and Instagram video of local happenings, strategic social media advertising, and partnerships with local media, like-minded organizations and key influencers. The PWCVB continued its partnership with the Providence Journal this year on a culinary video series called "Small Bites." These short demonstration videos featuring local chefs are released via both the PWCVB and Providence Journal social media channels and websites. There is also a printed companion piece in the food section of the newspaper and on the GoProvidence.com blog.

As a result of its social media marketing efforts, the PWCVB ended FY19 with 75,177 Facebook followers, 43,000 Twitter followers and 33,500 Instagram followers.



N THIS SECTION

ENTER TO WIN A WATERFIRE VIP EXPERIENCE

WaterFire, a multisensory art installation, draws hundreds of thousands of visitors to downtown Providence. Comprising a series of bonfires installed on downtown's three rivers, WaterFire combines aromatic wood smoke, flickering firelight and enchanting music to create a truly singular experience. Enter the form below for your chance to win a WaterFire VIP Experience.

This prize includes:

- Entry for two to the Brazier Society Tent, including food and select beverages.

- Δ boat ride for two* to leave from the Brazier Society Tent.

*Entry Deadline Extended: A winner will be selected on Monday, July 1, 2019. The winner must confirm attendance a minimum of two weeks prior to their preferred WaterFire date. WaterFire boat rides typically run between the hours of 8 p.m.-11:30 p.m. First choice for timing of boat rides is not guaranteed.

Contest Entry Form

Enter the form below for your chance to win. Only one entry per person. Some prize restrictions may apply.





GIFT-A-DAY GIVEAWAY 2018

It's Day 14 of GoProvidence's Gift-A-Day Giveaway.

ENTER TO WIN THE DAY FOURTEEN PRIZE

One, Three Station Sessions Base Station VR Lounge

\$50 Gift Card

Enter below to win today's gifts and check back each day until December 24 for more prizes.

We will be giving away prizes every day through December 24. Come to this page each day to view the prizes. Fill in our contest form below to enter. A winner will be chosen daily and, once confirmed, will be announced on our GoProvidence facebook page.

The winner must claim his/her prize within 48 hours of being notified. If the prize is not claimed, a new winner will be chosen.

Entry Information

Enter the form below for your chance to win today's Gift-A-Day prize and check back Enter the form between your chance to where the day and the chosen each each day until becember 24 for more prizes. A new winner will be chosen each day and will have 48 hours to claim the prize or another winner will be chosen.

You may enter once a day. Some prize restrictions may apply

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

75,177

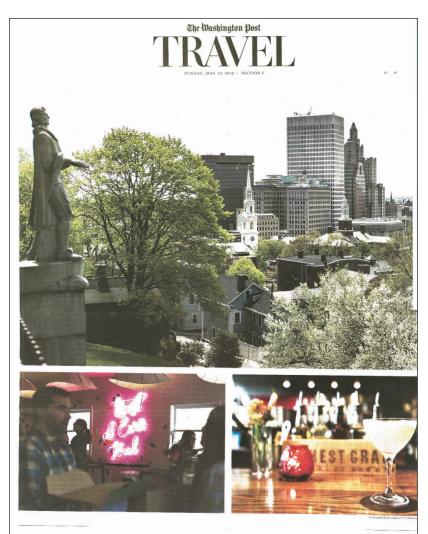




BLOG

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City to Watch PROVIDENCE, RI



Public Relations

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Working with Lou Hammond Group, Rhode Island's PR agency NJF, and its own resources to position Providence and Rhode Island as a premier travel destination, the PWCVB undertook an extensive public relations program, which included: developing appropriate communications tools to target the media; utilizing social media channels to reach out to journalists; working closely with partner organizations; and identifying and targeting travel trade and leisure consumer publications to support sales, marketing and membership efforts. The PWCVB hosted 83 journalists and influencers in the destination in FY19. The team also conducted deskside media visits in Boston, New York, Austin, Texas and Dublin, Ireland. Additionally, the PWCVB was a sponsor at TravelCon 2019, which was held in Boston and was attended by 800 bloggers, social media influencers and journalists.

The PWCVB's public relations efforts at the national level continued to be successful, with coverage about the destination that included several large stories on CNN.com and features in *The Washington Post* and *AFAR*, as well as placements in *Maxim*, *Time Out New York*, the Boston Herald, Forbes (online), Men's Journal (online), The Daily Meal (online) and Pure Wow (online) among many others. Providence was once again named a "City to Watch" by Worth magazine and Mayor Elorza was invited to speak at the publication's Cities Summit in June 2019.

Of all the gin joints in Wales: A Cardiff tour

YOU'RE GOING WHERE?

LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

Following a

of prize-win

FY19 featured a period of transition at the PWCVB. In December 2018, after serving as bureau president and CEO for more than a decade, Martha Sheridan left to assume the same role at the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau. Enormous strides were made under her leadership that established a solid foundation for future successes for the bureau and Providence/Warwick destination.

While the PWCVB board of directors conducted a nationwide search for Sheridan's successor, Vice President of Sales and Services Tom Riel took the helm as acting CEO for five months without missing a beat.

In April 2019, the PWCVB's Vice President of Marketing and Communications Kristen Adamo was named president and CEO of the bureau. Having spent nearly 15 years at the PWCVB, Adamo had been the primary architect for its marketing and communications strategy. A seasoned strategic planner, she works with the PWCVB's senior leadership team and board to develop longand short-term goals and metrics.





The PWCVB operates two visitor centers — a main information desk located in the RI Convention Center and a satellite location in the PWCVB's main offices at the IGT Building. In FY 19, the Visitors Center fulfilled more than 2,500 requests for visitor information; operated the main Visitors Center six days a week; and worked with the convention services team to monitor and staff visitor information tables in additional locations during larger meetings, conventions and sporting events.





Special Events

For more than a decade, Providence Restaurant Weeks has been providing visitors and locals with the chance to sample the area's critically-lauded restaurant scene. In FY19, both the January and July events featured nearly 100 restaurants serving three-course, prix fixe lunches for \$16.95, and/or three-course prix fixe dinners for \$29.95 or \$34.95. Another long-standing and popular event, the Federal Hill Stroll, drew nearly 900 people to the iconic Providence neighborhood by offering patrons discounts and samples from about 20 restaurants and businesses, as well as two beverages, for \$30 plus tax.

HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS

Two terms are always thrown around when describing Providence: walkable and historic. The PWCVB's four self-guided historical walking tours allow visitors to explore the city at their own pace while learning about its rich past. Explore the historic East Side, the rich culture of the West Side, the evolution of the Jewelry District, and the reinvention of Downtown.

Copies of these maps are available at both Visitors Center locations and offer snippets of the city's fascinating history, local lore and quirky tales. More than 27,000 copies were printed in FY19 alone.

In addition to physical maps, each walking tour is also available online at GoProvidence.com along with additional information about many points of interest. This section of the website received nearly 67,000 page views last year.

The success of these self-guided tours will continue through FY20 with the addition of a fifth map focused on early black history and a self-guided, mobile app-based Providence driving tour.



PROVIDENCE WALKS:



Providence Walks: The West Side

Providence Personalities







The sales and services team at the PWCVB is responsible for booking meetings and conventions into the RI Convention Center, the Dunkin' Donuts Center and other hotels and facilities throughout Rhode Island. It also operates the Rhode Island Sports Commission, which focuses on placing sporting events throughout the Ocean State. Once a meeting is booked, the services division works with the clients to make sure they have everything they need to run a smooth and successful meeting or event.

Events booked by the sales team in previous years, which actually took place in FY19, made the fiscal year a particularly successful — and lucrative — one. Hotel occupancy in Providence for FY19 was 71.1%, down 3.3% from last year while the Average Daily Rate declined to \$167.48, down from \$170.21. Supply in the market grew 5% this year while demand grew by 1.6%. The destination hosted a total of 242 groups booked by the sales team, which contracted 111,844 room nights in Providence and Warwick. These groups ranged from smaller events like military reunions, to meetings of professional associations, to large-scale sporting events. Their combined direct-spend impact yielded \$74.3 million for Rhode Island.

Sales bookings for FY19 were also strong. One of the primary ways that the sales team measures success is through the accumulation of hotel room nights.

In FY19, the PWCVB confirmed 284 definite bookings, totaling 123,132 hotel room nights. Those definite bookings are projected to have a direct-spend impact

of \$87 million. Booking this volume of meetings is the result of savvy sales strategy, a compelling product and sheer hard work. The sales team is deployed both geographically and vertically, with key markets receiving additional attention. In addition to the ever-growing sports market, the PWCVB aligns its sales efforts with economic sectors in which the region is strong, such as marine science, nursing and food science.

The sales team crisscrossed the United States, meeting with potential clients and attending 18 trade shows in FY19. They also partnered with area hotels and the team at the RI Convention Center on sales calls and hosting events that targeted meeting planners in key geographic areas, such as Washington, D.C., Chicago, New York, Boston, Minneapolis, Kansas City and St. Louis. During FY19, sales executives had more than 340 face-to-face meetings with prospective customers as well as 119 scheduled phone sales presentations. In addition, 33 customers conducted site visits in the Providence/Warwick area.

In order to remain competitive in an increasingly crowded marketplace, the sales team maintained their tri-cities connection with Madison, Wisc. and Albuquerque, NM. All three cities share a common customer base and continue to execute events together in market across the country. The three destinations hosted breakfasts at trade shows across the United States called "Caffeinate and Connect." Because the three destinations are located in different parts of the country, they can easily share a

customer base of clients whose events rotate throughout the U.S. This collaboration also benefits the meeting planner client, who can network with three destinations at once. Over the course of FY19, the three partners hosted more than 100 planners at events.

The PWCVB sales team also continued its beneficial relationship with Strategic Database Research (SDR), a market research company specializing in business-to-business call programs. SDR works with the PWCVB to streamline long lists of potential customers and identify those who may have business that is the appropriate fit for the destination. Over the course of FY19, SDR produced 77 new qualified prospects for the sales team accounting for 42,071 potential room nights. Additionally, SDR uncovered 76 customers interested in learning more about the destination. At year-end, more than 6,500 definite room nights booked can be accounted for as a result of the partnership with SDR.

Future Booking Highlights

Varsity Spirit Corporation

2020 Spirit Festival Nationals May 2020 | 2,800 Room Nights Estimated Direct Spend – \$2.5 million

NCAA Men's Basketball

2021 NCAA Men's Tournament March 2021 | 2,300 Room Nights Estimated Direct Spend – \$2.4 million

Business Network for Offshore Wind

International Partnering Forum April 2020 | 1,053 Room Nights Estimated Direct Spend – \$1.4 million

National Technical Investigators Association

Annual Training and Technology Exhibition July 2020 | 6,329 Room Nights Estimated Direct Spend – \$2.4 million

Association of Rehabilitation Nurses

2021 Annual Conference November 2021 | 1,866 Room Nights Estimated Direct Spend – \$1.1 million



Convention Services

The PWCVB's convention services team, consisting primarily of two people, worked with 242 meetings, conventions and sporting events in FY19. They serve as a conduit between planners and local vendors and facilities. They also assist with activities designed to boost meeting attendance, including on-site pre-promotion at major conferences and events the year before they take place in Rhode Island.

In FY19, the services team provided pre-promotion and hosted site visits for the following groups:

- Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
- Warehousing Education and Research Council
- American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians/ The United States Animal Health Association
- National Association of State Treasurers
- Enel Green Power North America
- Society for the Study of Evolution
- American Homebrewers Association
- WIDA International School Consortium



Tour & Travel

The group tour segment of the PWCVB's sales business remains consistent and vibrant and continues to be largely driven by bus tours. International flights via Norwegian Air's nonstop service from Green Airport created a fresh international pool of group travelers. Many of these groups utilized the PWCVB Visitor Center and its product offerings, including a variety of historical walking maps that provide guests with self-guided tours of some of Providence's most notable neighborhoods. These tours are great for small groups since they allow them to explore at their own pace and are accessible via physical maps or digitally on GoProvidence.com.

The PWCVB looks to forge new partnerships with tour operators by establishing even more touchpoints with groups visiting via motor coach, including access to the Visitor Center, gift bag packages and "step-on" guides — local tour guides who come on board the vehicle to provide destination information.



IRELAND VISIT

PWCVB Vice President of Marketing and Communications Kristen Adamo, Leisure Sales Manager Elise Swearingen and Director of National Accounts, Mid-West Region/International Kathleen Ceseretti traveled to Ireland in September 2018 to promote Providence as a destination for both leisure and business travel.

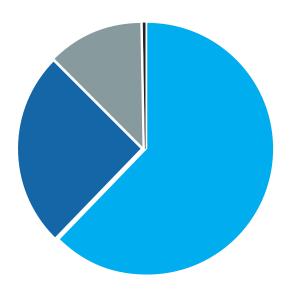
Providence's nationally recognized culinary achievements were on full display during the visit as chefs from Siena and Gracie's accompanied the PWCVB contingency through the Emerald Isle. Both chefs took part in sold-out dinners at "A Taste of West Cork" and participated in cooking demonstrations at "A Taste of the New World."

PWCVB representatives met with journalists from local media outlets, such as the Irish Daily Star, Irish Sun and Irish Daily Mail to discuss features about Providence-area attractions. The PWCVB also partnered with Cork Airport and Norwegian Airlines for a group tour sales presentation in an effort to promote Rhode Island to Irish tourists and groups. While spreading the word about leisure travel was a big part of the trip, PWCVB reps also met with many stakeholders about what Providence has to offer to the world of meetings and conventions. The destination was presented as a prime alternative to Boston and New York.

The PWCVB hopes to continue fostering ties with Cork through chef exchange programs and other collaborative initiatives on both sides of the Atlantic.



FY2019 Revenue & Expense Summary



REVENUE

Hotel Tax Collections \$2,589,705



Cooperative Agreements \$1,047,000

Private Sector Investment \$509,727



Miscellaneous \$2,098

TOTAL \$4,148,530

EXPENSES



\$1,326,716

Marketing and Communications \$1,329,719



General and Administrative \$851,144



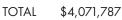
RI Sports Commission \$292,138



Partnership Development \$155,657



Visitor Services \$116,413





Goprovidence.com

PROVIDENCE WARWICK CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

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