

# VISIT STILLWATER

FY25 Business Plan



AMERICA'S FRIENDLIEST COLLEGE TOWN!

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** About Visit Stillwater
- 8** Roles of a DMO
- 9** About the Business Plan
- 10** Scope of Services
- 16** Goals and Deliverables



# ABOUT VISIT STILLWATER

Visit Stillwater OK, Inc. (dba: Visit Stillwater) is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Stillwater, Oklahoma. As the DMO, and primary storyteller for the community, the Visit Stillwater team lives, eats, and breathes *America's Friendliest College Town!*

The efforts of the Visit Stillwater team tie together and enhance an industry that is critical to the economic health of our community. Our organization has evolved and grown as the sole-source provider of destination marketing, and as an integral community and economic development engine for Stillwater for almost four decades.

We are responsible for promoting our community as an attractive travel destination while enhancing our public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the impact of travel, we strengthen the economic position and provide opportunities for people in our community.

Visit Stillwater promotes the long-term development of our community, focusing on convention sales, tourism marketing, and service. We are the masterminds behind campaigns marketing our entire community to meeting professionals, business travelers, and individual visitors. We represent the hotels, restaurants, meeting facilities, event venues, museums, attractions, and other hospitality professionals serving the traveling public.



The visibility of our role in these campaigns is often understated locally as our targeted audiences live in other communities; places such as Dallas, Wichita, Kansas City, Oklahoma City, and Tulsa. However, the resoundingly strong impact of our campaigns continues to be felt throughout our local business community.

We are the trusted partner for visitors and meeting professionals – the heart, soul, and energy of our community. The Visit Stillwater team is engrained into the fabric of our destination which enables us to better assist meeting and event planners and leisure travelers, while generating wealth for our local business partners. As a result, Visit Stillwater drives economic success and enhances the quality of life for our residents.

# ABOUT VISIT STILLWATER

## Visit Stillwater History

In 1985, Stillwater's destination marketing organization was created as a result of a 4% hotel room tax (lodging tax) that was passed by a vote of the citizens of Stillwater. The "Hotel Room Tax" Ordinance states the funds collected "shall be set aside and used exclusively for the purpose of encouraging, promoting, and fostering conventions, conferences, and tourism development in the City of Stillwater."

On February 8, 2022, Visit Stillwater was successful in passing a referendum by 70% that changed the ordinance from "hotel room tax" to "visitor tax", modernized the term "hotel" to "lodging", and increased the tax from 4% to 7% effective July 1, 2022.

The ballot language now states, "Funds collected shall be set aside and used exclusively for the purpose of encouraging, promoting, and fostering conventions, conferences, and tourism development through the use of long-range strategic destination marketing and management professional services and development and maintenance of visitor development amenities for the city, and shall be allocated as follows":

"70% to Visit Stillwater: Shall be used for long-range strategic destination marketing and management professional services to enhance Stillwater's economy, image, and quality of life through the promotion, marketing, and development of the visitor economy."

"30% to the City of Stillwater: Shall be administered by the Stillwater Economic Development Authority as recommended by the Tourism Advisory Committee (Resolution No. SEDA-2019-2) and used for the development and maintenance of visitor development amenities for the city."



# ABOUT VISIT STILLWATER

The amount of revenue generated by the visitor tax has grown substantially over the past thirty-eight years, and so have the number of hotels and other hospitality industry partners that must be marketed and promoted to visitors. The visitor tax is not used to promote Visit Stillwater, it is utilized by Visit Stillwater to promote Stillwater-based businesses and events that are part of the visitor development process. The total amount of resources that would be necessary to collectively market each of these organizations would greatly surpass the number of resources invested into the comprehensive marketing and sales plan of Visit Stillwater on behalf of the City of Stillwater for our local hospitality business partners.

Community visionaries put in motion the evolution of a dynamic and progressive destination marketing organization. Stillwater leaders saw a need, passed a funding source, created the organization, elected an oversight Board, and our community has benefited as a result. Visit Stillwater exists today for the singular purpose of operating as Stillwater's destination marketing and management organization.

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## DMO Organizational Structure

<b>Chamber of Commerce 501(c)(6):</b>	25 1/2 years	July 1, 1985 – December 2010
<b>City of Stillwater:</b>	4 years	January 1, 2011 – December 2014
<b>Independent 501(c)(6):</b>	9 1/2 years	January 1, 2015 – Present

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## DMO Location

<b>1985-2010:</b>	Chamber of Commerce – 409 South Main
<b>2011-Present:</b>	Current Location – 2617 West 6th Avenue • Visit Stillwater & 24/7 Visitor Information Center



# ABOUT VISIT STILLWATER

## Our Vision

To be a respected destination management leader through effective and innovative marketing, sales, and partnerships to ensure exceptional visitor experiences.

## Our Mission

To enhance Stillwater's economy, image, and quality of life through the promotion, marketing, and development of the region's visitor economy.

## Destination Vision

Stillwater will be recognized as one of the top visitor destinations in Oklahoma and *"America's Friendliest College Town!"*

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## Visit Stillwater Board of Directors

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**Chairman** - Blaire Atkinson - OSU Foundation

**Vice Chair** - Ival Gregory - Retired

**Treasurer** - Chad Weiberg - OSU Athletics Department

**At-Large** - Tommy Shreffler - OnCue Marketing

### Directors

- Colin Campbell - Payne County Expo Center
- Melissa Hubbard - Hampton Inn West & Residence Inn
- Dustin MacDonald - Chris' University Spirit
- Michal Shaw - Stillwater Medical Foundation
- Daren Shrum - Oklahoma State University
- Lee Roy Smith - National Wrestling Hall of Fame & Museum
- Cory Williams - Look Properties / Attorney
- Constance Williamson - Meditations Banquet Facility & Zannotti's Wine Bar

**CPA** - Mark Gunkel, Mark Gunkel, CPA PC

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## Visit Stillwater Employees

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**President & CEO** - Cristy Morrison

**Vice President & Director of Sales** - Nicole Horn

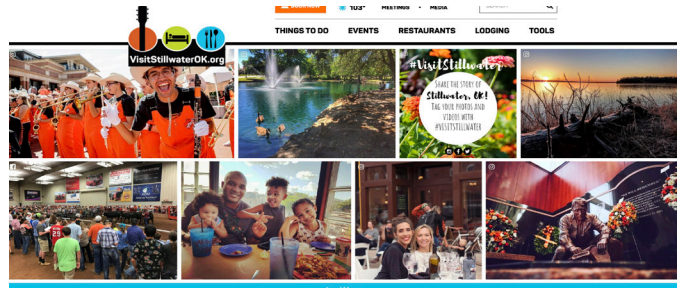
**Visitor Relations & Office Manager** - Sara Carrigan

# ABOUT VISIT STILLWATER

## Destination Value Statement

Visit Stillwater is committed to providing the maximum value to the City of Stillwater and its industry partners through a highly effective program of marketing, sales, and customer service, facilitating economic growth by advocating destination development. To that end, we will:

- Be Stillwater's official storyteller, sharing the community's brand as "America's Friendliest College Town!"
- Offer leadership through inclusion, facilitation, collaboration, innovation, and partnership
- Value and strive for creativity and diversity throughout all functional areas of our destination marketing organization
- Be customer focused, exceeding expectations with superior service
- Demand a culture of integrity, honesty, and fairness in everything we do
- Address every opportunity with passion, enthusiasm, and energy

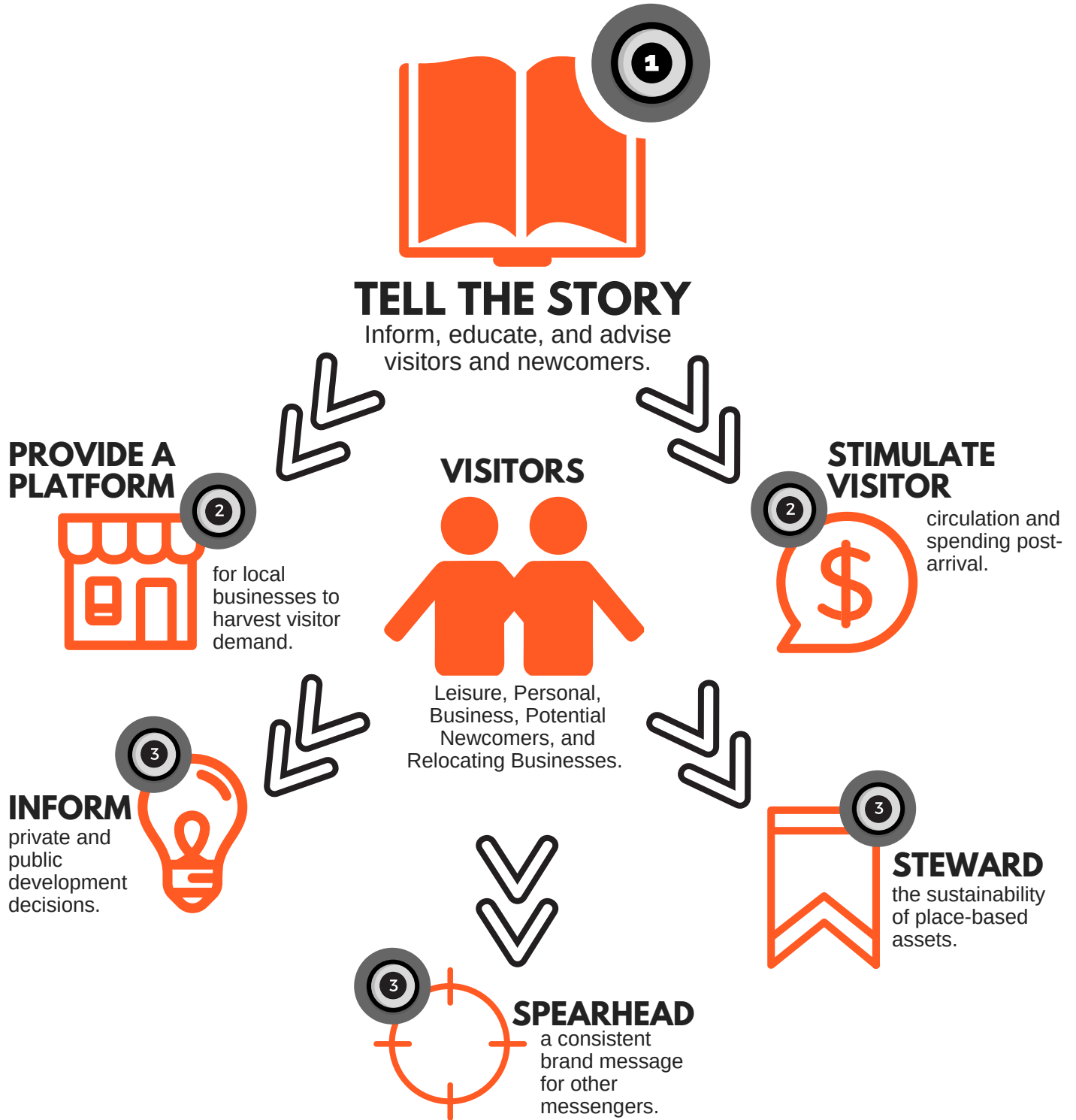


## WELCOME

**TO AMERICA'S FRIENDLIEST COLLEGE TOWN!**

Why yes, we really do believe Stillwater, Oklahoma is the place where smiles from strangers are abounding and hometown hospitality is a way of life. Our welcoming spirit is rooted in our Oklahoma history, the diversity forged by Oklahoma State

# ROLES OF A DMO





# ABOUT THE BUSINESS PLAN



Visit Stillwater leads the local tourism industry to generate visitor spending by developing and implementing comprehensive destination marketing and management programs. We are charged to represent Stillwater and assist in long-term development through a travel and tourism strategy.

The Fiscal Year 2025 Business Plan is a reflection of the Visit Stillwater team maximizing the impact of evolving comprehensive communications, marketing, sales, and services plans and projects. Flexibility and local partnerships contribute significantly toward the ability to attract visitors to our community.

Visit Stillwater produces the official *Stillwater Guide to the Local Scene* and *Event Planners Guide* geared toward driving additional business into Stillwater in the form of meetings, events, and leisure travel. Visit Stillwater also manages a robust website, social media platforms, and marketing campaigns geared toward visitors and residents to remain “in the know:” of activities occurring within the community.

The 24/7 Visitor Information Center is maintained and stocked by the Visit Stillwater team averaging 175 complimentary travel resources available to visitors upon arrival in our community or when needed by our residents. Two additional visitor information stands are provided by Visit Stillwater for both the inbound and outbound terminals at the Stillwater Regional Airport (SWO). The Visit Stillwater team secures a constant supply of material from Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma State University Athletics, the Stillwater Chamber of Commerce, and Visit Stillwater for distribution at the airport.

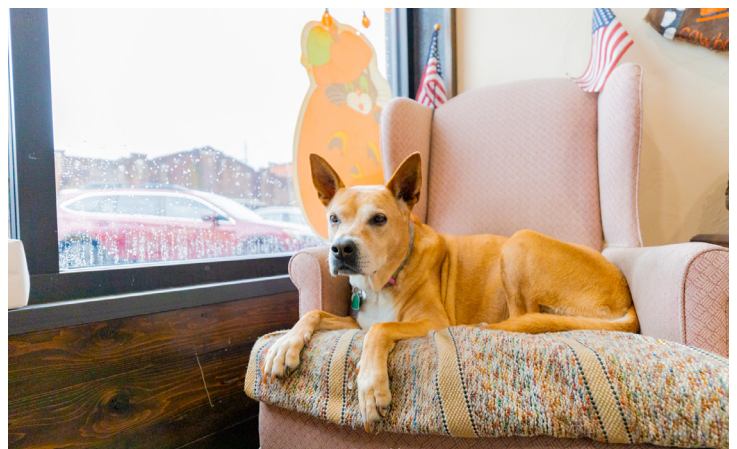
For visitors, Visit Stillwater is the key to the city. Visit Stillwater serves as an official point of contact for conference, meeting, and leisure travelers, and assistance is provided to all visitors who are encouraged to visit local historic, cultural, and recreation sites and attractions.

# SCOPE OF SERVICES

## A. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Develop and implement a comprehensive marketing and communications plan directed to visitors and residents.

- I. Manage a robust and responsive website spotlighting local hospitality industry partners, locally held events, local attractions, and visitor/meeting planner resources.
- II. Produce the Annual *Stillwater Guide to the Local Scene (Stillwater Visitors Guide)* in digital and print formats, which shall include City of Stillwater entities and events, including the Stillwater Regional Airport, Lake McMurry, Downtown Stillwater Cultural District, and Downtown Stillwater.
- III. Develop and Coordinate the official Stillwater Comprehensive Calendar of Events.
- IV. Coordinate Advertising, Social Media, Promotions, and Public Relations including:
  - Online/Digital Activities
  - Traditional/Print Activities
- V. Provide Media Relations and Community Awareness.



# SCOPE OF SERVICES

## B. MEETINGS AND EVENTS SALES

Establish a strong state, regional and national presence in the meetings and events industry to maximize visitor spending through day and overnight visitors for hotel partners and incremental sales for hospitality industry and business partners.

- I. Establish and maintain relationships with meeting and event planners to produce new, and retain existing, business for hotels, meeting and event venues, caterers, and other hospitality industry partners.
- II. Participate in local, state, regional, and national industry-related tradeshows and sponsor and attend high-profile events that will enhance meeting and event planner relationships.
- III. Coordinate all elements of every event request for proposals including detailed information about the local hospitality industry, availability of facilities and accommodations, local partner options, uniqueness of destination, services provided, and payment of bid fee if required for consideration.
- IV. Support via sponsorships, grants, and/or on-site services locally held events that attract substantial day or overnight visitors.
- V. Establish and maintain relationships with local hospitality industry partners through consistent communication, site visits, hosted events, familiarization tours, and education opportunities.



# SCOPE OF SERVICES

## C. MEETINGS AND EVENTS CLIENT SERVICES

Enhance the meeting and event planner experience through excellent customer service, as a trusted source of community resources, as well as reliable and dependable local experts.

- I. Build strong relationships with local hospitality industry partners to provide distinct, unique, and extraordinary visitor experiences.
- II. Serve as a liaison between meeting and event planners and local hospitality industry partners by providing “one-stop-shop” services.
- III. Conduct Pre-Meeting and Event Services:
  - Familiarization Tours or Site Inspections
  - Hotel Room Block Coordination to determine availability and rates
  - Meeting Facility, Event Venue, Catering, and Transportation Options
  - Tours, Special Events, Spouse Programs, Family and Youth Activities
  - Local Marketing and Public Relations Assistance
- IV. Provide On-Site Services:
  - *Stillwater Guide to the Local Scene*, Visitor Bags, Promotional Items
  - Request a “Welcome” from a local representative or official
  - Request Registration Table or Volunteer Assistance



# SCOPE OF SERVICES

## D. VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Support enhancements to the visitor experience.

I. Operate, maintain, and consistently update the Stillwater Visitor Information Center and Visitor Information Stands at the

- Entrance into Stillwater off of I-35: 2617 West 6th Avenue
- Stillwater Regional Airport – Inbound and Outbound Terminals

II. Manage and coordinate programs focused on generating additional sales tax.

III. Coordinate campaigns spotlighting the importance of shopping locally and utilizing local commercial air service through Stillwater Regional Airport (SWO).

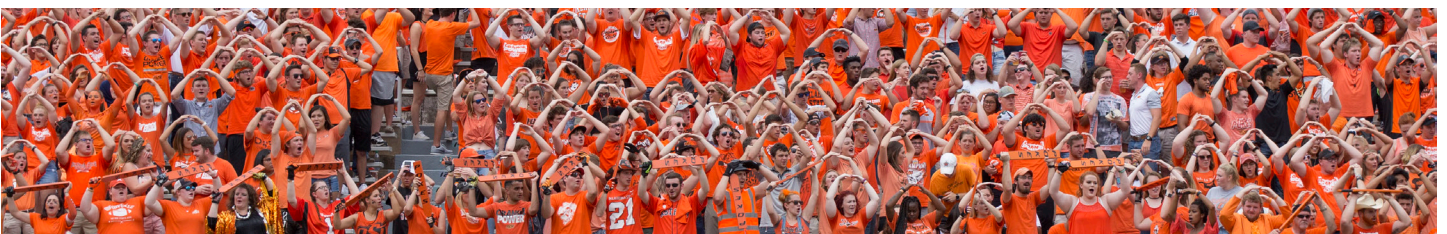


# SCOPE OF SERVICES

## **E. ADVOCACY - DESTINATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS, INDUSTRY RELATIONS, AND COMMUNITY CONNECTOR AND COLLABORATOR:**

Advocate destination enhancing developments and elevate the effectiveness and impact of destination marketing as an integral component of local economic development, while connecting with residents through community involvement and events.

- I. Work with local economic development partners to encourage the support of community-wide destination marketing efforts.
  - Invest in Destinations International - DestinationNEXT - a diagnostic tool to complete an objective self-assessment that can help determine priorities and strategies for the future.
  - Provide data and input and work in partnership with the City Tourism Advisory Committee to improve and increase visitor development and quality of life amenities.
- II. Assist local economic development partners as an integral component of business recruitment, site selection, expansion, and relocation.
- III. Provide market research, trends, impact analysis, visitor spending estimates, and other data to local partners to utilize within their specialized fields of economic development
- IV. Serve as a community asset by focusing on benefits provided to residents through enhancing the local quality of life.
- V. Promote Stillwater as an attractive travel destination by enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work.
- VI. Maintain a local inventory of available meeting and event facilities and venues.
- VII. Support and market local hospitality industry businesses, museums, events, and attractions.



# SCOPE OF SERVICES

## F. ADMINISTRATION

Provide managerial, administrative, and fiscal services for strategic planning, operation efficiencies, education, and community-based initiatives and partnerships.

- I. Coordinate a strategic planning retreat process every 3-5 years.
- II. Maintain report tracking and measurements following industry best practices and as identified by contract with Stillwater Economic Development Authority.
- III. Maintain Destinations International Destination Marketing Accreditation Program designation by following best practices and completing annual progress reports.
- IV. Apply for annual RedBud Awards recognition through the Oklahoma Travel Industry Association - the highest honors given in the Oklahoma tourism industry.



# GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A. Marketing & Communications	FY 24-25	Goal	% of Goal
Increase website traffic by 3%			
Increase website page views by 3%			
Increase website sessions originating from Dallas DMA by 2%			
Increase referred traffic from social media to website by 3%			
Publish 365 original social media posts			
Increase social media followers by 5%			
Increase social media reactions by 5%			
Increase Facebook reach by 3%			
Provide 100 sweepstakes giveaways			
Promote 2,000 locally held events at VisitStillwaterOK.org			
Load 50 primary local events on the OK Tourism and Recreation Department website			
Create 12 videos highlighting Stillwater events, attractions, and businesses			
Create 4 :30 second commercials			
Publish 24 blog posts			
Produce 12 display/print ads in partnership publications (i.e.: OK Travel Guide, Green Country Travel Guide, STATE, POSSE, Ovations, etc.)			
Distribute 100,000 Stillwater Guides to the Local Scene (per calendar year)			
Write 12 News Press columns			
Distribute 12 “Still in the Know” postcards			
Email 12 eNewsletters			
Distribute 10,000 copies of 4 different rack cards			
Display 72 banner placements outside the 24/7 visitor information center & VS office			



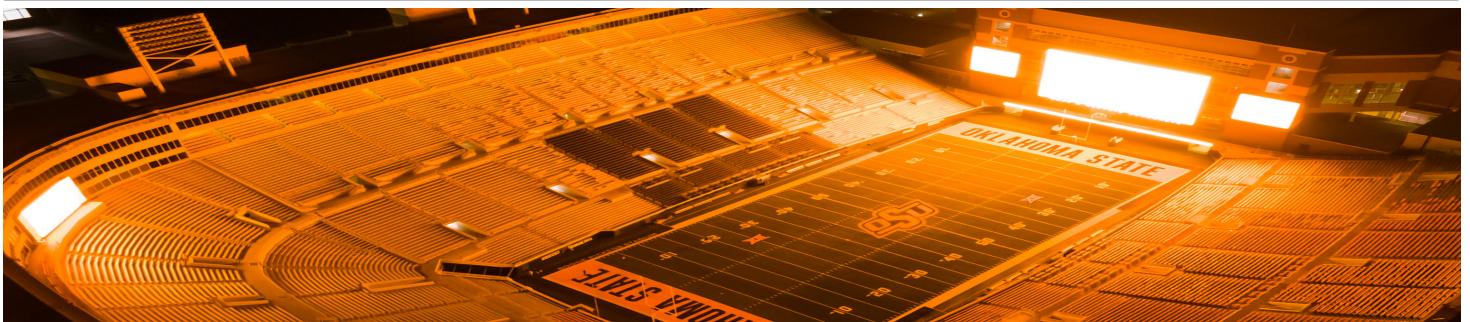
# GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A. Marketing & Communications - continued	FY 24-25	Goal	% of Goal
Display 200 event flyers inside the 24/7 visitor information center			
Manage 112 360° degree virtual tours for online platforms through Threshold 360			
Provide the program, serve as a speaker, or exhibit at trade shows for 12 organizations/classes			
Coordinate guests weekday mornings for Tv-31's "The Morning Edition" - # of guests			
Appear on live local radio weekday mornings to share upcoming event information - # of appearances			
Record podcasts with media partners to promote events and services - # of podcasts			



# GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

B. Meetings & Events Sales	FY 24-25	Goal	% of Goal
Number of sales communications with existing client accounts =			
Number of potential new clients for future meetings or events =			
Number of events booked and/or serviced through Visit Stillwater =			
Increase new events booked and/or serviced through Visit Stillwater by 5%			
Provide visitor development incentive grants & sponsorships to future or expanding events (Reflects grants & sponsorships awarded during the year):			
- Total amount of grants & sponsorships awarded = \$			
- Total estimated number of day visitors =			
- Total estimated number of overnight visitors =			
Total estimated visitor spending (through the Destinations International Event Impact Calculator) = \$			
Post event impact of events receiving visitor development incentive grants & sponsorships during the year (Reflects granted & sponsored events occurring during the year):			
- Total amount of grants & Sponsorships awarded = \$			
- Total estimated number of day visitors =			
- Total estimated number of overnight visitors =			
Total estimated visitor spending (through the Destinations International Event Impact Calculator) = \$			
Host 4 (quarterly) Stillwater Hotel Education Luncheons			



# GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

C. Meetings & Events Client Services	FY 24-25	Goal	% of Goal
Number of services communications with existing client accounts =			
Number of groups assisted =			
Conservative estimated value of services provided = \$			



# GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

D. Visitor Experiences	FY 23-24	Goal	% of Goal
Number of publications distributed from 24/7 visitor information center =			
Number of publications distributed from 2 visitor information stands at SWO - inbound and outbound terminals =			
<b>405 Day - April 5 - Shop &amp; Fly SWO campaign</b>			
- Number of individuals who participated =			
- Number of entries =			
- Total sales generated =			
<b>National Travel &amp; Tourism Week - May - Shop &amp; Fly SWO campaign</b>			
- Number of individuals who participated =			
- Number of entries =			
- Total sales generated =			
<b>Krazy Daze - July - Shop &amp; Fly SWO campaign</b>			
- Number of individuals who participated =			
- Number of entries =			
- Total sales generated =			
<b>Fly Home for the Holidays - End of Nov. - First of Jan. - Shop &amp; Fly SWO campaign</b>			
- Number of individuals who participated =			
- Number of entries =			
- Total sales generated =			

