



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2025

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RECORD-BREAKING



VISION:

Grow our economic impact at a higher rate than our competitors

MISSION:

Inspire visitors to experience Wisconsin

VALUES:

Excellence, Collaboration, Balance, Fun, Authenticity

View the full strategic plan [here](#).

ABOUT US

Wisconsin Council on Tourism

The 21 members of the Wisconsin Council on Tourism advise the Secretary of the Department on matters related to tourism. Visit [this webpage](#) for a full list of current members on the Wisconsin Council on Tourism.

Tourism Committees

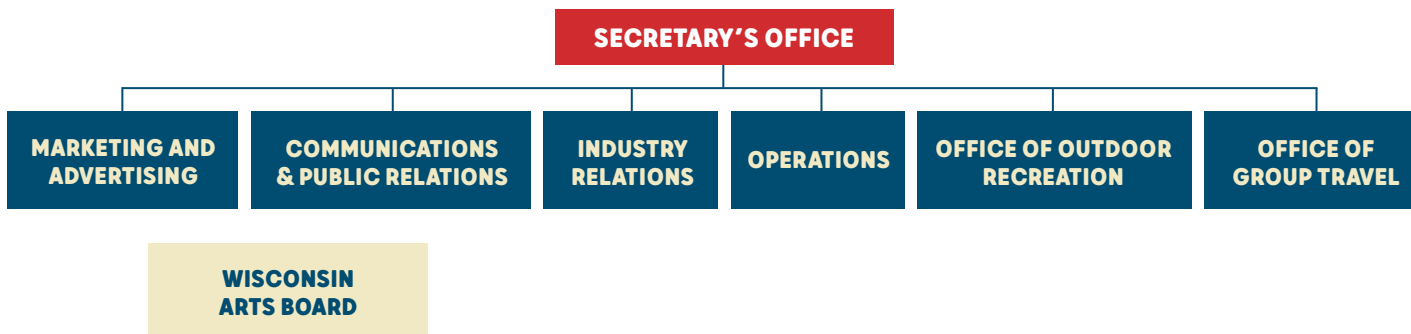
Six committees advise the agency in supporting the Department of Tourism's strategic plan.

- [Marketing Committee](#)
- [Joint Effort Marketing Grant Committee](#)
- [Tourist Information Center Grant Committee](#)
- [Group Travel Grants Committee](#)
- [Outdoor Recreation Committee](#)
- [Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility Committee](#)

Staff

The Department of Tourism, which markets under the brand name Travel Wisconsin, had position authority for 27 full-time staff and three project positions in Fiscal Year 2025. The Wisconsin Arts Board employs five staff. For a full list of current staff members, visit our [staff directory](#).

The Department of Tourism successfully implemented flexible/alternative work schedules and hybrid work options. Tourism positions require various amounts of travel within Wisconsin and out-of-state to execute business needs. This includes representing the department at tradeshow, productions, events, meetings and conferences and often deviates from standard office hours. These policies support staff retention with employees citing flexibility, hybrid arrangements and work/life balance as important factors. The data presented in this annual report highlights the many successful outcomes produced by our staff.



AWARDS

ESTO Mercury Award, Digital and Social Campaign

U.S. Travel Association

Fall Color, Snow and Trail Seasonal Reports

Adrian Awards

Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI)

Silver Award for Public Relations Consumer Campaign, Tasty Makers

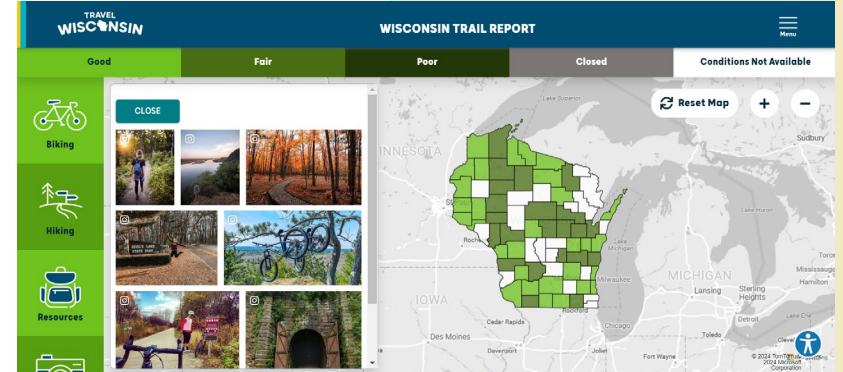
Bronze Award for Digital-Social Media Campaign, Wisconsin Flights

Bronze Award for Public Relations Feature Placement Article, [Food & Wine feature](#)

40 Under 40, Class of 2025

Milwaukee Business Journal

Maria Van Hoorn, Deputy Secretary



FOOD&WINE

This is the Only Place Outside of Switzerland That Requires a License to Make Cheese

And it can take up to two years to earn one.

By [Regan Stephens](#) | Published on June 20, 2024



Gouda won the most domestic awards of any United States Cheesemaker in Norway. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE DAIRY FARMERS OF WISCONSIN



FROM TOURISM SECRETARY ANNE SAYERS



There is no other way to put it. Wisconsin tourism is absolutely rocking. In the past year, we welcomed more visitors than ever before, hosted the NFL's largest offseason event, shattered website records, stocked up our trophy case with national recognitions and celebrated a third consecutive year of record-breaking economic impact with tourism generating \$25.8 billion in 2024.

There is no doubt. We're on a roll. Innovation, determination and creativity are producing BIG results both at the Wisconsin Department of Tourism ([see highlights here](#)) and throughout the entire Wisconsin tourism industry, and our industry is motivated for more. Because "more" means more visitors patronizing locally owned businesses, more family-supporting jobs and more community vibrancy created by tourism.



I am grateful for our unequalled industry partners. Wisconsin's destination marketing organizations, business owners and hospitality workers display boundless capacity for giving, for hard work, for determination and, a lot of times, sacrifice and bravery. I observe these values everywhere I travel. Tourism's success is a collective effort of the 182,000 full- and part-time workers who support the industry.

I can't say enough about the staff at the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, either. They are committed to growing tourism's economic impact, challenging themselves to one-up competitors, living and breathing data-informed decisions and just making the job fun. Our accomplishments wouldn't be possible without the trust and support shown by Governor Tony Evers and the Wisconsin Legislature.

The future of tourism is boundless, and together, we'll deliver more for Wisconsin and Wisconsinites.

Take care and happy trails,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne N. Sayers". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

Secretary Anne Sayers



2024 ECONOMIC IMPACT

Wisconsin tourism saw a third consecutive year of record-breaking economic impact in 2024. All-time high visitation last year drove the record-breaking \$25.8 billion in total economic impact. This breaks down to \$70.7 million in economic impact per day. Wisconsin also welcomed a record-breaking 114.4 million visits, which eclipsed the pre-pandemic former record from 2019. This increase in visitation, combined with economic contributions from all corners of the state and strategic investments in tourism promotion, led to more visitors making vacation memories and spending their dollars in Wisconsin.



\$25.8 billion
total economic
impact



114.4 million
visits



182K
full- and part-time
jobs supported



MARKETING

As a destination marketing organization, Travel Wisconsin prioritizes industry-leading, data-driven marketing and advertising to raise awareness, elevate perceptions and generate economic impact in Wisconsin. Seasonal brand campaigns marketed Wisconsin's celebratory spirit and unforgettable experiences under the brand idea of "Here's to Those Who Wisconsin." Guided by research, Travel Wisconsin began advertising in a 14th media market (Peoria, Illinois) in summer 2025 and updated its target audience to adults ages 25-54 with kids - groups that travel in larger parties and spend more.

Outside of the seasonal brand campaigns, Travel Wisconsin continued to build on the success and awareness of two popular content series: [Wonders of Wisconsin](#) and [Here's to Being Here](#). A dedicated campaign promoted the Wonders of Wisconsin with bus wrap advertising, billboards, gas pump TV ads and more in key media markets throughout summer 2024, driving a 258% increase to the Wonders landing page. In fall 2024, Here's to Being Here, an episodic video travel series, debuted new episodes featuring three destinations. Additionally, Travel Wisconsin produced Spanish-language content for Here's to Being Here and partnered with Expedia to elevate Travel Wisconsin's first Spanish-language campaign.

Consumers visited TravelWisconsin.com in record numbers, finding inspiration and ideas for planning memorable getaways. Perennially popular pages on TravelWisconsin.com include the Fall Color Report, Trail Report and Wisconsin Snow Report, which collectively received a national award for the innovative marketing tactics that support these pages.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY MARKETING METRICS

1.5 billion

Advertising impressions

17.2 million

Website sessions

14.2 million

Social media reach (*organic only*)



PUBLIC RELATIONS

Travel Wisconsin’s public relations campaigns complement marketing efforts by building brand awareness, improving perceptions and extending the brand’s reach regionally, nationally and globally. Building relationships with key media contacts is critical to public relations. One example of relationship-building included hosting an editors’ retreat with the travel publication AFAR. Connections made at the retreat led to earned media above and beyond what was included in the robust partnership agreement.

Additionally, travel writers discover story ideas firsthand on individual and small group familiarization trips that result in rich coverage, including media visits for the 2025 NFL Draft and a Wisconsin-based holiday movie that filmed in Door County. The public relations team further engaged travel writers in-person and virtually at conferences and deskside visits to network, pitch and inspire deeper storytelling of Wisconsin.

Travel Wisconsin also collaborates with content creators to generate awareness and elevate perceptions of the state. Content creators share real experiences of Wisconsin in authentic voices that resonate with their audiences, creating third-party credibility and social media buzz.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY PUBLIC RELATIONS METRICS

1,132

Media hits

114

Media engaged at
conferences and desksides

8.1 billion

Impressions

53

Media visits

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY CONTENT CREATOR METRICS

7.1 million

Content creator impressions

22

Content creator partnerships

2.7%

Engagement rate
(1.5% industry standard)

244

Posts



2025 NFL DRAFT

The 2025 NFL Draft presented a major opportunity for elevating Wisconsin tourism. Travel Wisconsin maximized the Draft through a multi-channel, integrated marketing and public relations campaign to promote all of Wisconsin before, during and after the NFL's largest offseason event.

In partnership with ESPN Radio, Travel Wisconsin launched the Dream Draft Sweepstakes that generated nationwide awareness and buzz before the Draft. During the event, Travel Wisconsin caught the attention of hundreds of thousands of people in Green Bay and millions at home through a mix of broadcast commercials in strategic advertising markets and social media content creator partnerships. Innovative geofencing technology shared Wonders of Wisconsin ads on social media with over half a million users on the ground in Green Bay, and retargeting digital and social ads kept Wisconsin top-of-mind for attendees after the Draft.

The NFL Draft turned football fans into Wisconsin fans, and Travel Wisconsin played a key role in encouraging repeat visitation that will benefit Wisconsin tourism for years to come.

NFL DRAFT KEY CONTENT CREATOR METRICS

4.6 million impressions

3.4% engagement rate

8 content creator partnerships

107 posts

NFL DRAFT KEY MARKETING METRICS

22K sweepstakes entries

1.1 million broadcast advertising impressions during Draft week

52.4 million radio sweepstakes impressions (February-April)



CO-OP PROGRAM

The Travel Wisconsin Co-op Program meets the needs of industry partners and consumers while delivering the greatest economic impact possible. Operated on a calendar year cadence, the Co-op offers industry partners high-quality marketing and public relations opportunities centered around a shared vision and goal. Partners big and small stretch their dollars further, try new promotional tactics and programs, and reach consumers that would otherwise be budgetarily unattainable.

CALENDAR YEAR 2024 KEY CO-OP PROGRAM METRICS

12

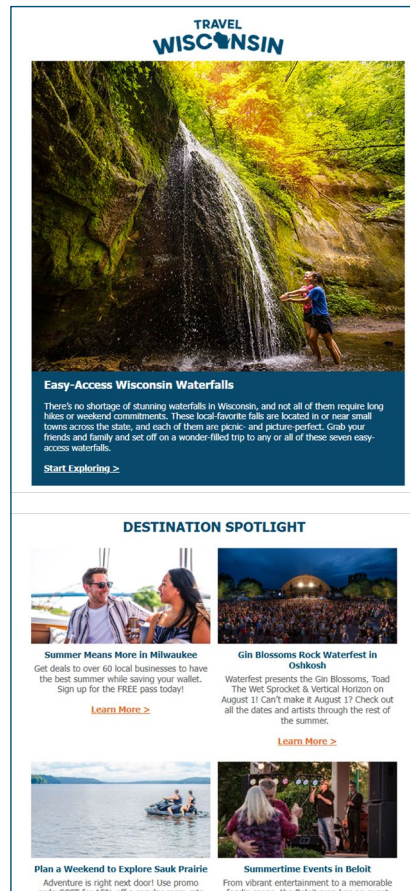
Total Co-op offerings

114

Unique partners participated

\$193,000

In partner investments



9:05 AM

Last year when you were in Door County, I was watching your stories and made my whole family book a trip immediately!! We're all up here this weekend, staying at the Dörr and it's so LOVELY 🥰. Great recco, we're having a fabulous time!!

10:38 AM

Oh my goodness this makes me SO happy!!

INDUSTRY RELATIONS

The industry relations program acts as a bridge, connecting Travel Wisconsin and industry partners around a shared vision to grow tourism's economic impact. Travel Wisconsin's industry relations team provides partners with resources, forms collaborative relationships and represents the organization throughout the state. Programs like the Co-op, grants, business and event listings, campaign toolkits, webinars and Travel Green provide the industry the tools and knowledge to grow business. The industry team also recruits volunteers to maintain popular consumer resources like the Wisconsin Trail, Fall Color and Wisconsin Snow Reports. Each spring, the [Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism](#) (WIGCOT) delivers high-quality, expert-led professional development for the industry. In connection with the conference, the Governor's Tourism Awards celebrate the remarkable achievements of tourism professionals and organizations.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY INDUSTRY RELATIONS METRICS

246 seasonal reporters recruited

291 Travel Green members

11 webinars hosted

8,243 resource downloads

644 WIGCOT registrants

66 Governor's Tourism Award nominees

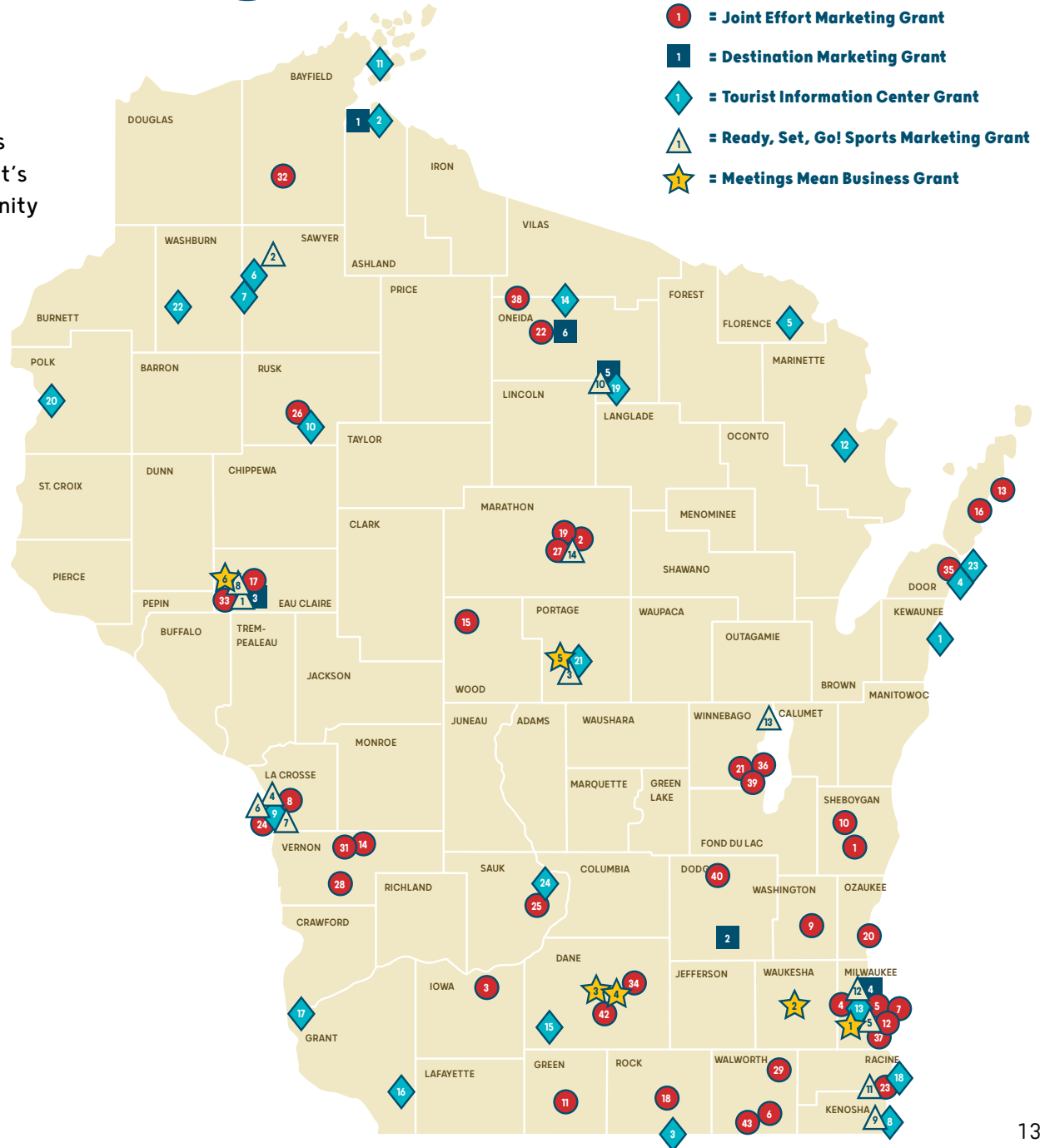


GRANT PROGRAMS

Click [here](#) to view all grant reports in detail. The map notes where the grant recipient is located; however, each project's economic impact and reach extend well beyond its community and county. Grants remain one of the Department's most popular industry programs.

GRANT AWARD AMOUNTS (FISCAL YEAR 2025)

JEM	\$1,174,060
RSG	\$136,577
MMB	\$83,423
TIC	\$160,000



OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreation drives tourism and Wisconsin's economy. The outdoor recreation industry contributed a record-breaking \$11.2 billion to Wisconsin's gross domestic product in 2023 for back-to-back record years, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), and supported nearly 97,000 jobs. At the same time, research consistently shows outdoor recreation is a top reason travelers vacation in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation acts as the central hub for this vast industry. The Office connects outfitters, manufacturers, retailers, land managers, nonprofits and tourism organizations to the resources and tools to boost the outdoor economy. In Fiscal Year 2025, the Office updated its [Strategic Plan](#) - collaboratively developed with hundreds of stakeholders - to chart the course for its vision and mission for the next five years.

Major accomplishments this past year include piloting the [Do-It-Yourself](#) (DIY) Economic Impact Program to assist partners with documenting the local value of outdoor recreation, helping secure the International Trails Summit in Madison to elevate Wisconsin as a premier outdoor destination to industry peers globally and launching the inaugural [Governor's Outdoor Industry Awards](#) to recognize outstanding individuals and organizations.

Initially created as a project in 2019 and reauthorized in two consecutive budgets, the 2025-2027 Biennial Budget established the staff positions of the Office of Outdoor Recreation as permanent within the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY OUTDOOR RECREATION METRICS

- 5** DIY Economic Impact Program partners
- \$27 million** in economic activity documented through DIY Economic Impact Program
- 850** International Trails Summit attendees from 17 different countries
- 64** Unique Governor's Outdoor Industry Award nominees



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT TRAIL

The Frank Lloyd Wright Trail welcomes travelers to experience the legacy of America's most famous architect on a road trip through southern Wisconsin to nine Wright-designed sites. Launched in 2017, the Trail elevates the perceptions of Wisconsin as an arts and culture destination and raises awareness for the state regionally, nationally and globally.

In the past year, Travel Wisconsin secured feature stories covering the Frank Lloyd Wright Trail in respected travel publications like [Matador Network](#) and [AFAR](#). Prospective visitors in the Washington D.C. area learned about the Trail during a segment on the [Good Morning Washington](#) program, and listeners of the [Armchair Explorer](#) podcast were taken on an auditory journey of Taliesin - Wright's home, school and studio that's part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation.

Travel Wisconsin and Taliesin Preservation partnered to promote Taliesin to in-state and out-of-state audiences during a dedicated [Wonders of Wisconsin](#) campaign in summer 2024, and social media posts highlighted Wright's works throughout the year, including a [content creator partnership](#). At the end of Fiscal Year 2025, international tour operators, content creators and media toured two Frank Lloyd Wright Trail sites for post-conference visits following IPW.

AFAR

This 3-Day Road Trip Lets You See 9 Frank Lloyd Wright Works—and Explore Where the Architect Grew Up

This route is a rare look at the life experiences and landscapes that shaped one of the most famous architects in the U.S.



Located in Wisconsin's Driftless Region, the Taliesin Preservation Visitor Center is one of Frank Lloyd Wright's Works. Courtesy of Taliesin Preservation Visitor Center

**WONDERS
OF WISCONSIN**

TRAVEL
WISCONSIN

 **TALIESIN**

 **TALIESIN**
PRESERVATION

TRIBAL TOURISM

The Department of Tourism helps travelers discover the distinct traditions, cultural heritage and unique offerings of Wisconsin's 11 federally recognized Tribal nations. Native culture is the foundation of our state's story and provides sought-after experiences for travelers. Marketing and public relations efforts uplift the Native American tourism opportunities in Wisconsin.

The public relations team hosted a Tribal tourism press trip that visited four Native American nations, pitched stories to top media publications and collaborated with Tribes on Armchair Explorer podcast episodes about [culture](#) and [cuisine](#). Travel + Leisure named the Apostle Islands among its [50 Best Places to Travel in 2025](#), specifically citing the Ojibwe culture and experiences in the area. In total, the Department secured 21 earned media placements featuring or mentioning Tribal tourism.

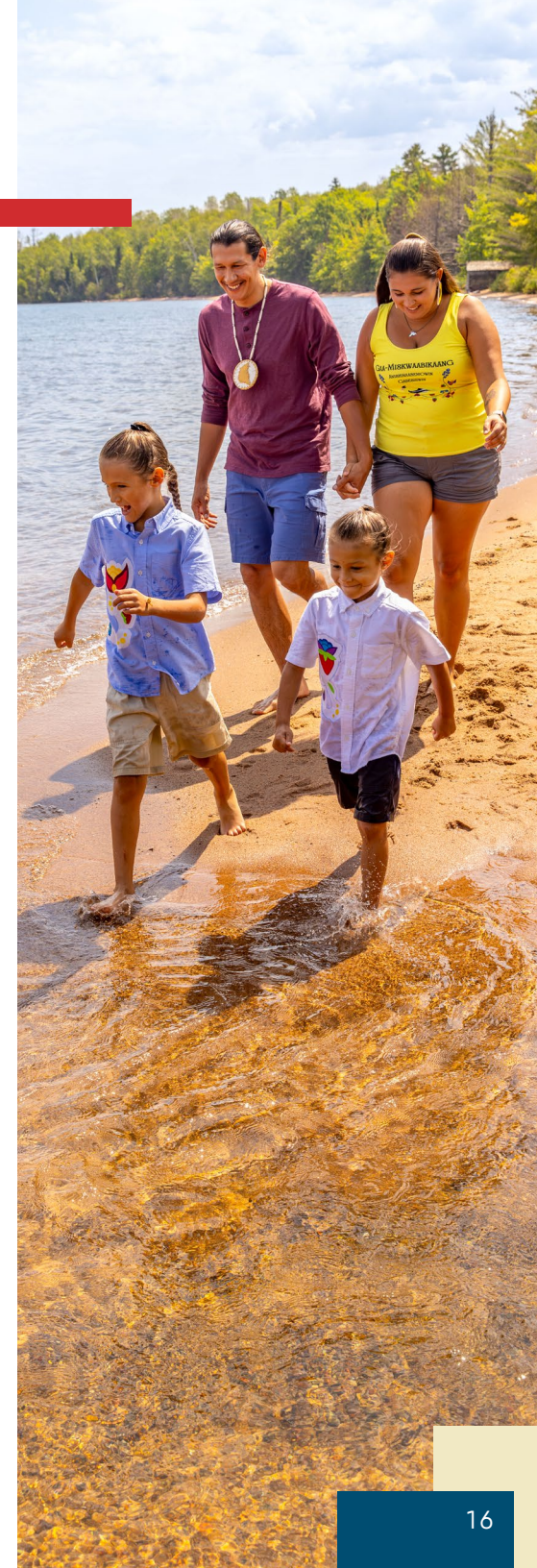
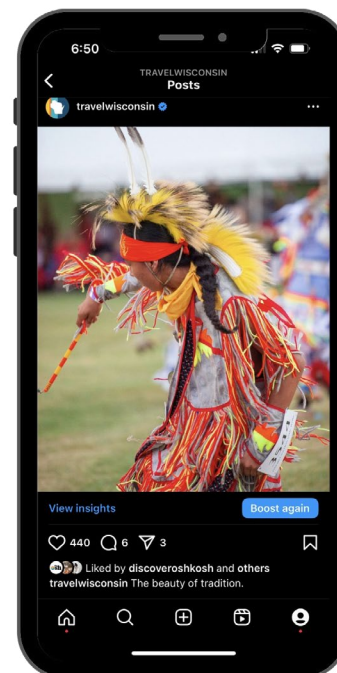
Marketing uplifted Tribal tourism with a featured insert about powwows in the Wisconsin Traveler publication, showcasing Frog Bay Tribal National Park in the 30-second summer 2025 brand campaign and in social posts throughout the year. Other areas of engagement included partnering with Native American Tourism of Wisconsin (NATOW) at Travel Wisconsin's State Fair booth, working with partners to update 24 Tribal event and 57 Native American-owned business listings on the Travel Wisconsin website and showcasing Frog Bay in the Great Lakes USA 2025 Visitor Guide.

LEXINGTON
HERALD LEADER

**Wisconsin is serious about its history,
playful for its visitors**



Passages Exhibit at Madeline Island Museum, which is a fascinating repository of artifacts celebrating all the cultures (Ojibwe, French, English and American) who have called this largest of the Apostle Islands home. (Courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society/TNS) TNS



OFFICE OF GROUP TRAVEL

The Office of Group Travel's mission is to grow the high-value meetings, sports, motorcoach and international tourism sectors, which collectively generated \$10.1 billion in economic impact in 2023 (the latest available data). The Office manages the [Sports Wisconsin](#) and [Meet in Wisconsin](#) brands, solicits RFPs, attends trade shows and builds relationships with key decision makers in the group travel space.

Established in 2023, the past fiscal year was the first full year with a dedicated Program Manager. The Office attended nine trade shows, one sales mission and sponsored nine additional trade shows to form connections and generate leads. The Office nearly tripled the number of requests for proposals (RFPs) it solicited from the previous fiscal year and conducted a series of meetings and sports facility tours to enhance the Department's knowledge of the group travel product. Investments in group travel research identified growth opportunities, while the Office improved its visual presence by investing in a redesigned trade show booth along with imagery and digital assets to promote Wisconsin's sports and meeting facilities.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY GROUP TRAVEL METRICS

18 industry trade shows attended and/or sponsored

215 scheduled appointments at trade shows

14 partner site tours conducted

65 partners collaborated with at trade shows

63 RFPs generated



BUDGET

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Department of Tourism had Program Revenue (PR) receipts of \$9,936,823.50, \$33,437,894.25 of authorized General-Purpose Revenue (GPR) and \$2,276,998.76 of authorized Segregated Fund Revenue (SEG) for a total available amount to spend of \$45,651,716.51. Note that the authorized GPR and SEG as well as PR receipts above include amounts carried forward from Fiscal Year 2024 in continuing and biennial appropriations. In Fiscal Year 2025, Tourism had total expenses of \$40,208,343.54, including \$191,911.37 of Program Revenue-Federal expenses.

** Note: The above data does not include spending from the Arts Board, which is an attached board for state government budgeting purposes but operates independently from the Department of Tourism.*



CONTACT INFORMATION



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Travel Wisconsin Social Media



[Instagram.com/TravelWisconsin](https://www.instagram.com/TravelWisconsin)



[X.com/TravelWI](https://twitter.com/TravelWI)



[Facebook.com/TravelWisconsin](https://www.facebook.com/TravelWisconsin)



[Pinterest.com/TravelWisconsin](https://www.pinterest.com/TravelWisconsin)

Industry Social Media



[LinkedIn.com/TravelWisconsin](https://www.linkedin.com/company/TravelWisconsin)

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism thanks decision makers, agency partners, Wisconsin Council on Tourism members, committee members and industry stakeholders for supporting our mission to inspire visitors to experience Wisconsin.

