

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEARS 2020 AND 2021

FORWARD TOGETHER WITH PURPOSE



VISION: We believe in the **power of exploration** and **travel**

MISSION: **Inspire travelers** to experience Wisconsin

VALUES: Can-do, authentic, collaborative, impact-driven, passionate

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. For a full list of current members of the Wisconsin Council on Tourism, please visit [our website](#).

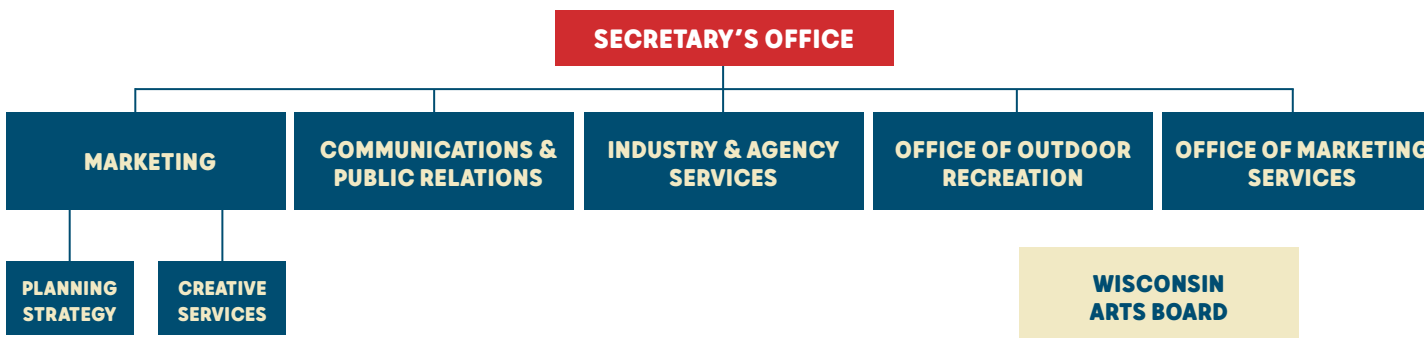
Tourism Committees

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

- [Marketing Committee](#)
- [Joint Effort Marketing Grant Committee](#)
- [Meetings & Conventions Committee](#)
- [Sports Marketing Committee](#)
- [Tourist Information Center Committee](#)
- [Outdoor Recreation Committee](#)
- [Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion Committee](#)

Staff

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism has position authority for 27 full time staff and 3 project positions. The Wisconsin Arts Board employs 4 staff. For a full list of current staff members, please visit our [staff directory](#). The Department succeeded in transitioning to fully remote work and provided flexible scheduling for staff to manage childcare, family members, etc. as was needed to respond to the pandemic. This flexibility allowed staff to focus on their work and reduce the stress from the COVID environment, which in the end, allowed for greater productivity.



AWARDS

Gold Award, Public Relations - Special Event category

Hotel Sales & Marketing Association International's (HSMIA) Adrian Awards, Travel Wisconsin and Wisconsin Cheese along with partners TURNER and Lippe Taylor for Destination: Cheesecation virtual event

2021 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence

PRSA, Travel Wisconsin and Wisconsin Cheese along with partners TURNER and Lippe Taylor for Destination: Cheesecation virtual event

Shorty Awards Finalist

Shorty Awards, Travel Wisconsin along with partner Hiebing for Slow TV video series

Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Sales, Marketing and Revenue Optimization

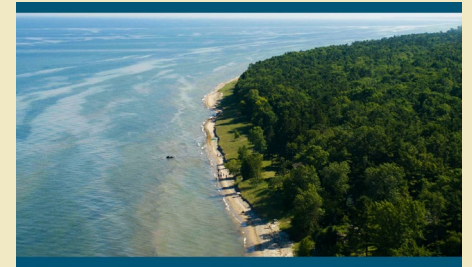
Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMIA),
Secretary-designee Anne Sayers

Fennimore Area Chamber of Commerce 2020 Exemplary Service Award

Regional Tourism Specialist Andrew Nussbaum

Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners

2020 Special Recognition, Andrew Nussbaum



FROM TOURISM SECRETARY-DESIGNEE ANNE SAYERS



Wisconsin's tourism industry broke records in 2019, generating more economic activity for the state than ever before. The plan was to springboard from that growth in 2020, a year that was to bring global events to our doorstep and put Wisconsin on its biggest stage yet, to drive even greater economic activity for our state. As you well know, those plans were stifled, and Tourism was put to its greatest test by the global pandemic. We now know that 2020 will set the baseline for the growth and recovery ahead as we build back - and beyond - the 2019 numbers.

Even in its most challenging year, Tourism proved that it is a powerful driver of the state's economy. Despite travel being down nationwide, Wisconsin still welcomed 90.7 million visitor trips in 2020 and Wisconsin's travel spending percent change compared to 2019 fared better than the national average, according to the U.S. Travel Association. The key was staying focused and proactive. While the Wisconsin Department of Tourism's strategic plan was built long before the pandemic came into view, it served us well as we kept Wisconsin top of mind for travelers in and out-of-state.

We continued to use the data to inform how to best resonate with our audiences at a time when traveler sentiment varied greatly from one person - and one month - to another. We developed the [Wisconsin Travel Pledge](#) to give travelers confidence as they considered vacations and staycations. We rolled out a shared brand promise that allows every corner of the state to celebrate what makes them unique. We adjusted our marketing and public relations messages and tactics to keep the spotlight on Wisconsin during a difficult time. We leaned into clear trends that indicated spiking interest in road trips and outdoor recreation, both of which Wisconsin was well positioned to capitalize upon, particularly with our new Office of Outdoor Recreation helping connect the dots. We relied on our relationships with industry leaders and decision makers to stay ahead of the curve and work as a team.

I have so many reasons to be optimistic for Wisconsin's tourism industry, an industry that has proved time and time again that it is comprised of resilient, innovative, strategic, hospitality-minded folks. We have exactly what travelers are looking for as they seek out new experiences and I know we have what it takes to deliver on their expectations. I am so proud of how our agency and industry not only weathered the storm but grew stronger because of it. I couldn't be more excited for what's next as we continue to build back by encouraging travelers to discover the unexpected in Wisconsin.

Safe travels and happy trails,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne N. Sayers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A".

Secretary-designee Anne Sayers

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Department of Tourism is Wisconsin's smallest cabinet agency, making up just one half of one percent of the state budget and one half of one percent of the state workforce, yet its economic impact is tremendous. Despite the global pandemic, 90.7 million visitor trips were taken in 2020, resulting in \$17.3 billion in total business sales as well as \$1.2 million in state and local taxes, while supporting 157,000 jobs. Even in our toughest year, the power of tourism as a major economic driver was clear in communities across the state.



\$17.3 billion
total business sales



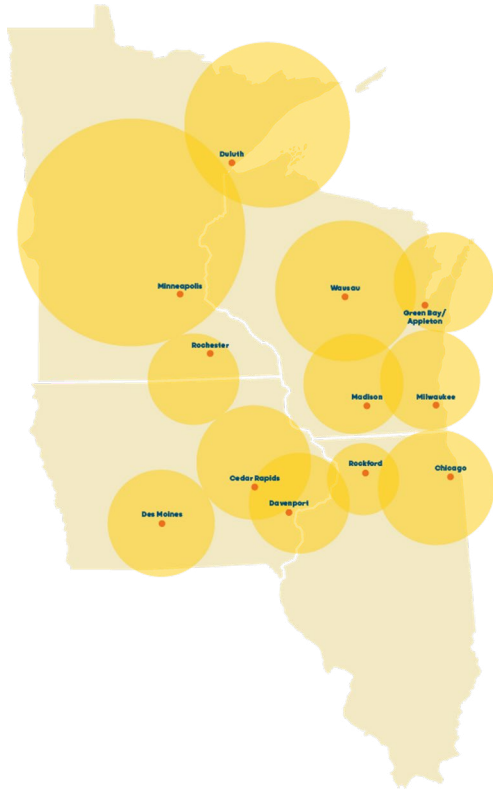
90.7 million
visitor trips



157,000
jobs



MARKETING



Data has long been a core pillar through which Travel Wisconsin builds its approach to marketing the state as a premier travel destination. From improving our marketing mix to developing a new shared Wisconsin brand promise and rolling out a refreshed Travel Wisconsin brand, the team has been hard at work following the data to make a meaningful impact with travelers and our marketing dollars work as hard as possible.

We developed a first-of-its-kind proprietary [Propensity to Visit Model](#) that identifies the maximum return on investment opportunity for our advertising using data from leading market research experts Longwoods International and Tourism Economics as well as visitation intelligence company Arrivalist. This model informed our summer 2021 advertising campaign which reached 12 markets, twice as many as Wisconsin tourism's record-setting year of 2019, including the historic markets of Chicago, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Madison and Green Bay along with seven new markets - Cedar Rapids, Duluth, Rochester, Davenport, Des Moines, Rockford and Wausau. Additionally, with the approval of new market expansion dollars in the 2019-2021 biennial budget, our spend was higher in each of the markets with a deeper reach.

Seasonal campaigns captivated travelers with relevant activities and our ever-popular Wisconsin Fall Color Report and Wisconsin Snow Report continued to serve as valuable resources to help travelers plan their adventures. With the help of the Office of Outdoor Recreation, a new Wisconsin Trail Report was launched for trail conditions for hiking and biking. To support our advertising campaigns, we continued to foster an engaged community on social media and develop compelling website content to help provide a one-stop-shop for travelers.

Shifts in our marketing tactics due to the pandemic caused marketing results to vary from year-to-year. A pivot to in-state only advertising for our summer and fall campaigns resulted in lower overall advertising impressions for fiscal year 2021. Even though travel decreased due to the pandemic, website sessions remained fairly steady, showing promising signs for future travel intent and reinforcing the value of the content available on TravelWisconsin.com including our evergreen travel inspiration and newly created interactive games and sweepstakes.



MARKETING KEY METRICS

FY 2020

570.8 million

Advertising impressions

10.1 million

Web sessions

4.9 million

Social media reach (Facebook and Instagram)

4.6 million Social media video views
(Facebook and Instagram)



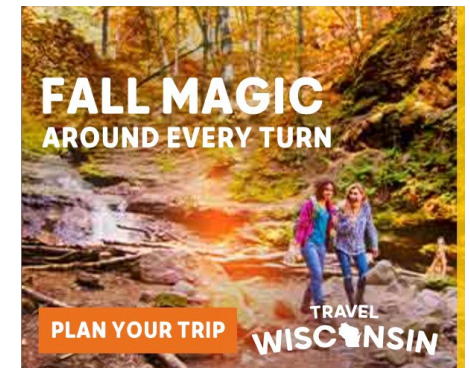
FY 2021

406 million Advertising impressions

9.9 million Web sessions

5.1 million Social media reach (Facebook and Instagram)

4.1 million Social media video views (Facebook and Instagram)



PUBLIC RELATIONS

Through our public relations efforts, we were able to introduce Wisconsin to a broader audience of potential travelers by increasing awareness and preference for Wisconsin as an inspiring, desirable leisure travel destination. With years of expertise working with top-tier national and regional travel publications and freelance journalists, our PR team is continuously identifying key media contacts, building relationships and proactively pitching unique Wisconsin stories resulting in coverage in *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Midwest Living*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Chicago Magazine*, *Condé Nast Traveler* and more. During the pandemic, we were also an early adopter of both virtual media events and deskside visits, which were effective ways to engage with writers, keep Wisconsin top-of-mind for future stories and inspire travel writers to visit Wisconsin to uncover additional story ideas. Our PR impressions moved the needle from 992.8 million in FY 2020 to 1.9 billion in FY 2021.

In addition to working with in-state, regional and national traditional media, we also reignited our influencer program. We partnered with influencers focused on outdoor recreation and culinary stories to develop authentic social media content showcasing their experience discovering the unexpected in Wisconsin. We also connected the dots with influencers and the Office of Outdoor Recreation to include tours of state outdoor recreation manufacturing facilities. And we saw Wisconsin content resonating with their audiences - in fact, content from our Travel Wisconsin influencer campaign saw an engagement rate more than double the industry standard.

Cheesemakers Are The Pride Of Wisconsin



Wendy Altschuler Contributor

Travel

I cover travel, adventure, and culture across the globe, specializing in nature and the great outdoors.

Follow

Listen to article 9 minutes



NEWS & ADVICE
The Best Spots for Bird Watching in the U.S.



In New Glarus, Wisconsin, fiberglass cows dressed in Swiss garb reflect the town's origins.

Wisconsin and other states in the Midwest have deep European roots.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDRE JENNY, ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

TRAVEL

How to take a European road trip without leaving America's Midwest

A scenic drive in Wisconsin takes in Swiss yodelers, Norwegian trolls, and more.

BY RAPHAEL KADUSHIN



PUBLISHED AUGUST 7, 2020 • 12 MIN READ

PUBLIC RELATIONS KEY METRICS

FY 2020 KEY PR METRICS

908 Stories

992.8 million Impressions

36 Virtual or in-market media engaged (desk sides, hosting)

2 Virtual events

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. The New York Times
Forbes Chicago Tribune Bloomberg
allrecipes! MidwestLiving TRAVEL+LEISURE

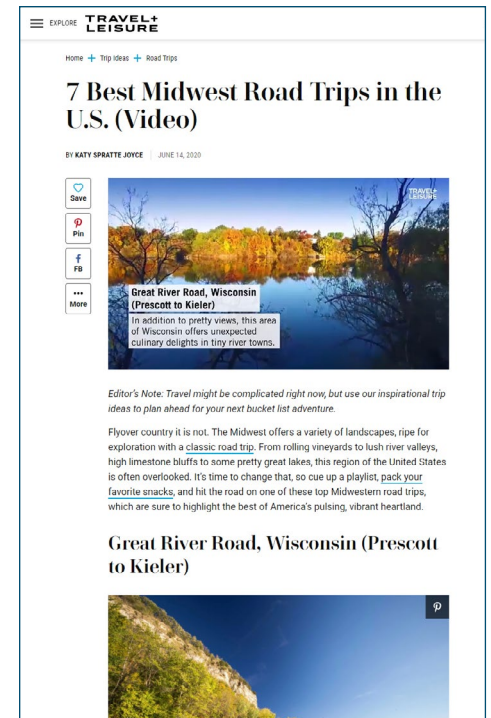
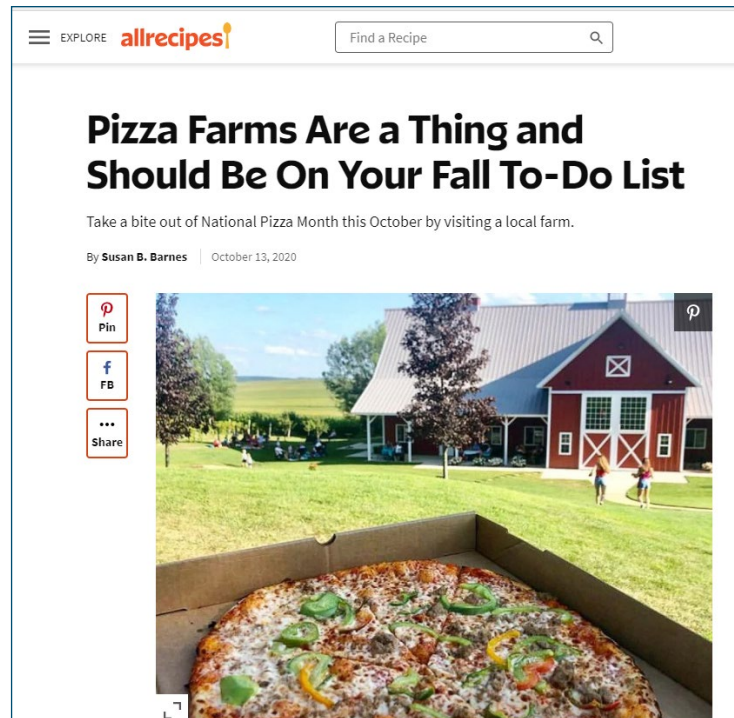
FY 2021 KEY PR METRICS

814 Stories

1.9 billion Impressions

72 Virtual or in-market media engaged (desk sides, hosting)

5 Virtual events



PUBLIC RELATIONS KEY METRICS

FY 2020 KEY INFLUENCER METRICS

4 Influencer visits

637 thousand*

Influencer impressions

*Only partial data available
due to change of PR agency



Milwaukee blog post is live!!

#travelwi #visitmke @travelwisconsin @visitmilwaukee

Travel

Welcome to Wisconsin, Milwaukee, to be exact! This past month, I was invited to discover the hidden gems of Wisconsin. As a person who prefers to travel without any expectations or preconceived notions, I am able to truly enjoy the beauty of Wisconsin. **Swipe up!** to see more photos.

FY 2021 KEY INFLUENCER METRICS

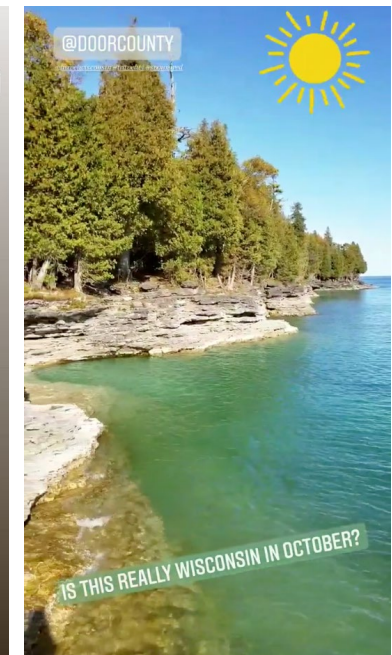
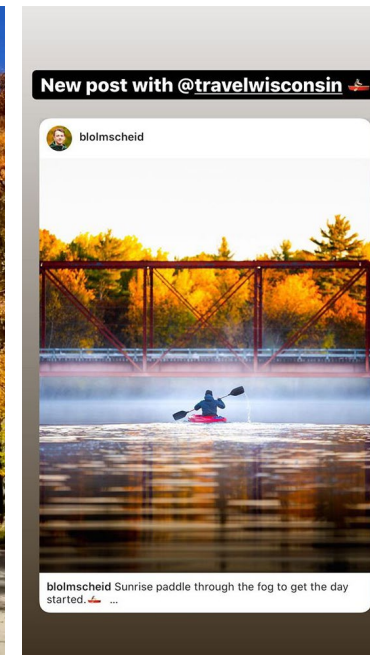
12 Influencer visits

2.3 million

Influencer impressions

5.3%

Engagement (2%
industry standard)



TRAVEL WISCONSIN CO-OP PROGRAM

The Travel Wisconsin Co-Op continued to evolve to elevate the Wisconsin brand and foster a positive traveler experience by engaging partners big and small across the state with a shared vision and goals. This collaborative approach was designed to provide strategic and affordable opportunities to help industry partners engage and attract more visitors in order to drive economic impact. Throughout fiscal year 2020, 69 partners participated in our marketing co-op programs. For fiscal year 2021 as more partners were looking to stretch their marketing dollars during the pandemic, new marketing co-op offerings were added and public relations co-op offerings were available for the first time. As a result, 211 partners participated in marketing and PR co-op programs in fiscal year 2021.



KEEP IT FRESH IN ASHLAND

Good times right by the water

In the heart of the Chequamegon Bay, downtown Ashland brings a charm to any day. Full of locally owned shops, restaurants, and other one-of-a-kind delights (over 20 historic murals!), they're ready for you anytime.

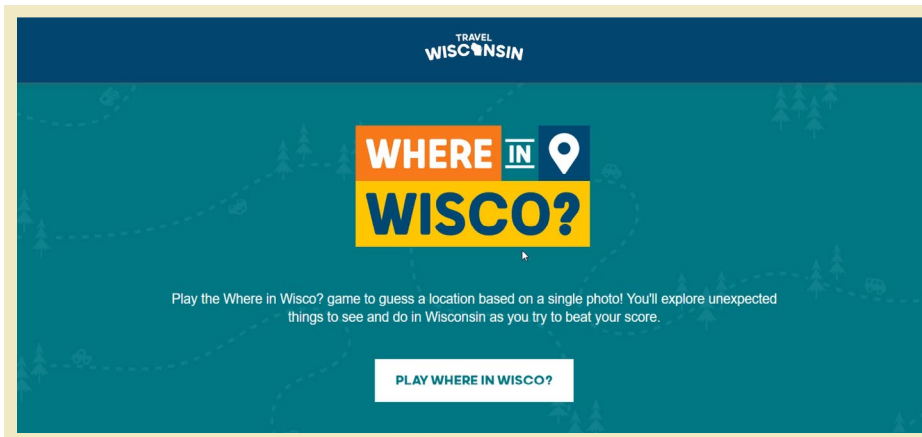
SEE EVERYTHING IN ASHLAND



PANDEMIC PIVOTS

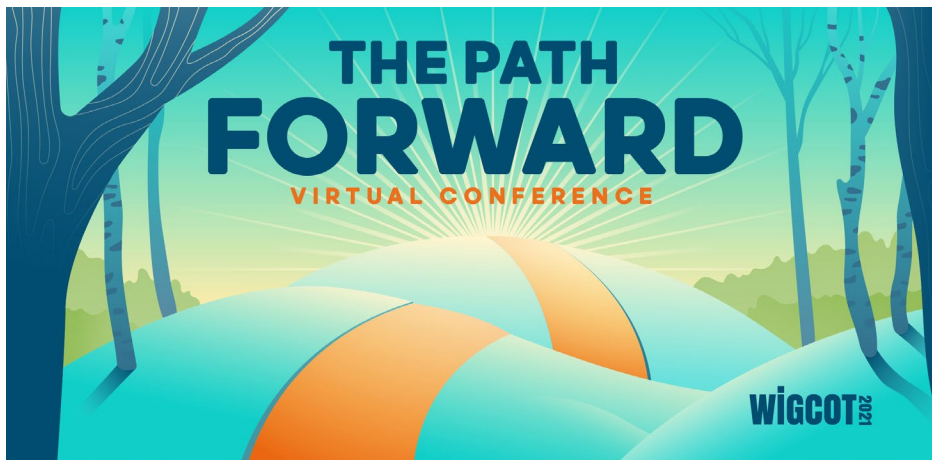
Tourism is an essential, cross-sectional slice of every community in the state. It always has been, but the pandemic year emphasized that point as more and more people bought local and traveled closer to home. Although the pandemic required us to rethink the way in which we reach travelers, the Department never strayed from its mission to inspire travelers to experience Wisconsin. Travel Wisconsin developed a series of games, sweepstakes and refreshing content to shine a spotlight on different sectors of the tourism industry and provide inspiration for that next Wisconsin adventure. These recovery campaigns were promoted through a variety of tactics including social media, email marketing and public relations reaching more than 6.4 million through our owned channels and generating earned media coverage throughout the state.

According to Longwoods International, local spending infused \$2.5 billion into Wisconsin's economy in 2020 that would have been spent elsewhere on a vacation, including nearly \$821 million in restaurant spending. At a time when our communities needed us most, Wisconsin stood up for Wisconsin. By placing curbside orders, purchasing gift cards, supporting businesses highlighted through Travel Wisconsin's recovery campaigns and sweepstakes like the Fish Fry Faceoff and Great Wisconsin Getaway, we encouraged Wisconsinites to play visitor, exploring their nearby communities and local businesses.



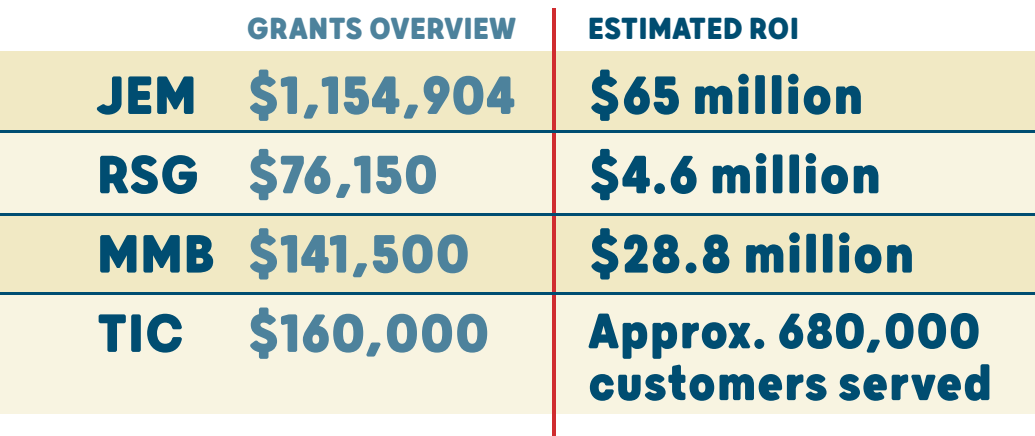
INDUSTRY RELATIONS

We're glad to serve as extended teammates of our industry partners across the state by engaging in shared goals. Throughout the pandemic, we kept a pulse on our industry through regular surveys of destination marketing organizations, which ultimately helped inform our nearly \$12 million Tourism Relief to Accelerate Vitality and Economic Lift (TRAVEL) Stimulus Grant Program. We increased our frequency of industry communications, providing access to Longwoods International COVID-19 Travel Sentiment Studies and other timely resources and information from the Secretary's office. Additionally, our Regional Tourism Specialists completed nearly 2,000 partner meetings and presentations (virtual and in person). As the eyes and ears of the industry with a regional focus and subject matter expertise, these meetings are a crucial piece of the strategic work of the Department.



Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism (WIGCOT) is a marquee event each year to connect with our industry partners and share in the excitement for the Travel Wisconsin campaigns. While we've missed connecting with partners in person at WIGCOT over the past two years, in 2021 we shifted from one in-person event to four virtual programs. The virtual programming ran from March - May 2021, receiving more than 600 registrants. This approach extended the opportunities for our industry to engage and connect as we paved the path to recovery and included industry expert keynote speakers, a brand and campaign rollout and topic-based breakout sessions. Recordings from WIGCOT 2021 continue to be available to industry partners [here](#).

[Click here](#) to view all grant reports in detail.

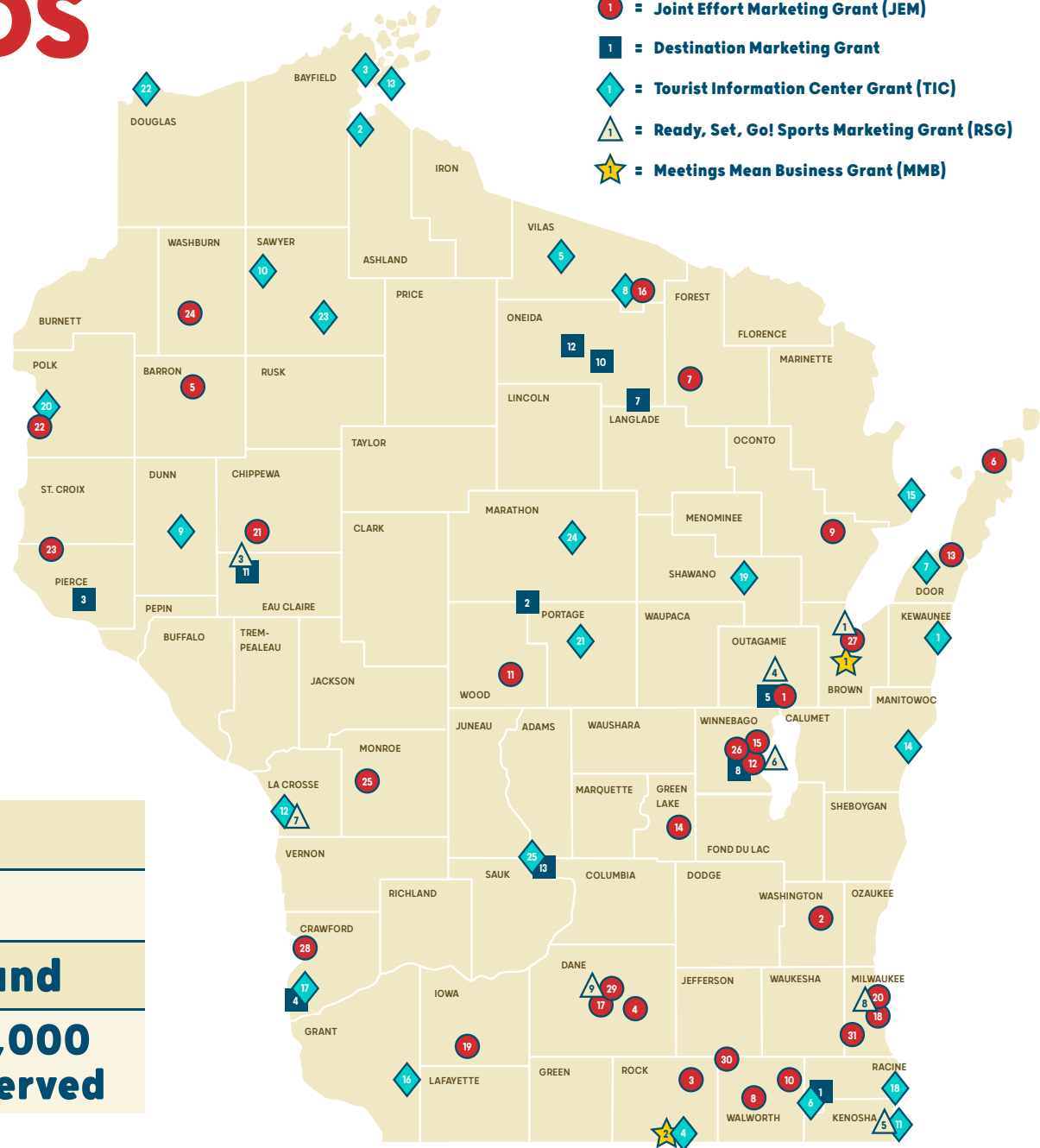


FY 2021 GRANT AWARDS



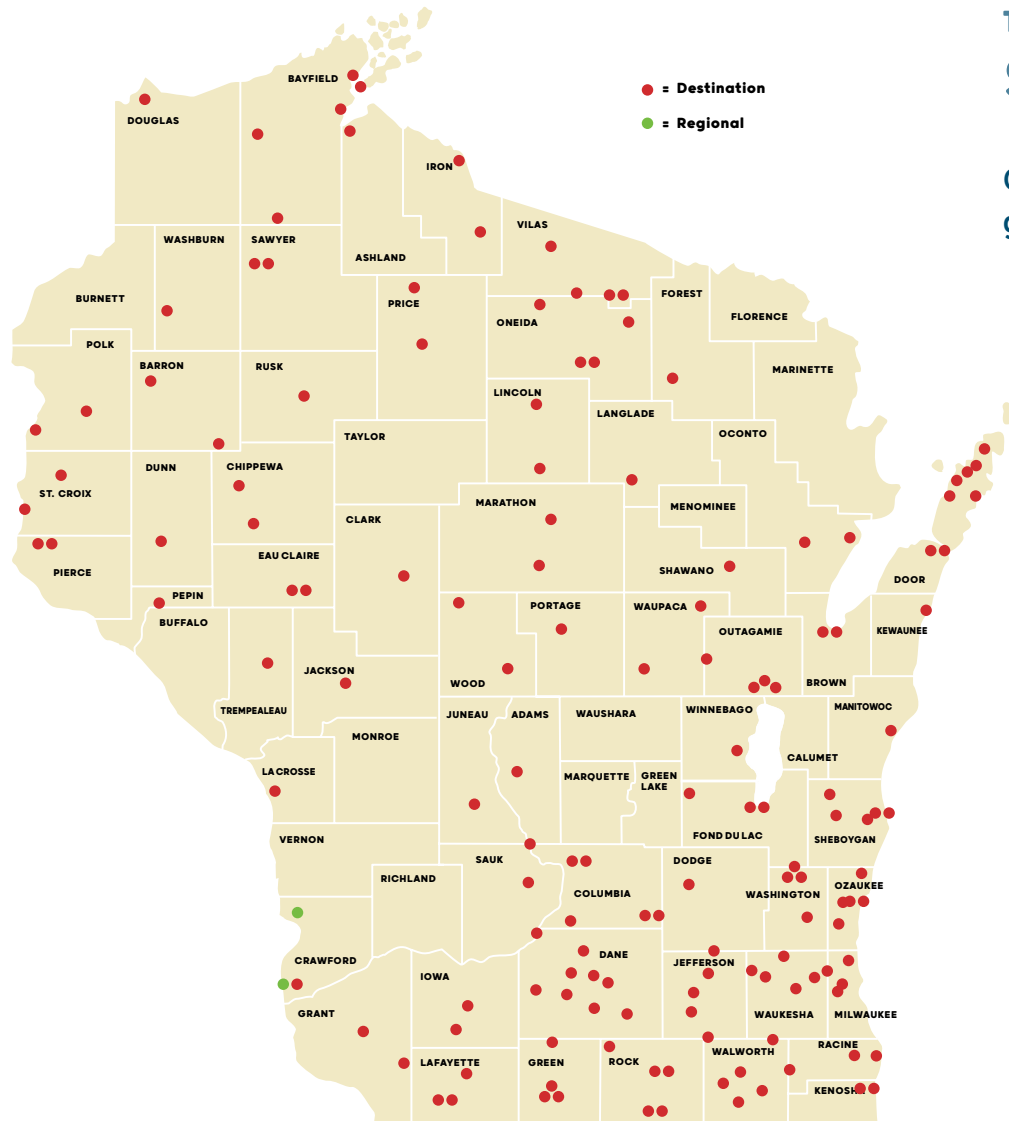
Click [here](#) to view all grant reports in detail.

- 1 = Joint Effort Marketing Grant (JEM)
- 1 = Destination Marketing Grant
- 1 = Tourist Information Center Grant (TIC)
- 1 = Ready, Set, Go! Sports Marketing Grant (RSG)
- ★ = Meetings Mean Business Grant (MMB)



GRANTS OVERVIEW		ESTIMATED ROI
JEM	\$1,130,000	\$21 million
RSG	\$111,997	\$22 million
MMB	\$27,230	\$175 thousand
TIC	\$148,993	Approx. 632,000 customers served

TRAVEL GRANT AWARDS



TOTAL OF
\$11,894,966

[Click here](#) to view all
grant reports in detail.



FEDERAL DOLLARS ALLOCATED TO THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

CALENDAR YEAR 2020

Total of \$83.9 million:

- \$17 million for live music and entertainment venues
- \$20 million for lodging and hotels
- \$10 million for movie theaters
- \$11.9 million for Wisconsin Travel Grants
- \$15 million for shuttered businesses
- \$10 million for cultural organizations



CALENDAR YEAR 2021

Total of \$152.55 million:

- \$10 million for local tourism investment projects
- \$75 million for lodging grants
- \$11.25 million for movie theaters
- \$12 million for live event small businesses
- \$2.8 million for minor league sports teams
- \$10 million for live venues
- \$15 million for destination marketing organizations
- \$8 million for summer camps
- \$1 million for the Wisconsin Historical Society to assist in reopening historical sites
- \$7.5 million to increase marketing support for Wisconsin's tourism industry

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor Recreation is big business in Wisconsin, generating \$7.8 billion to the state's economy and supporting over 93,000 jobs. The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation was created in the 2019-2020 biennial budget and is a central hub for Wisconsin's outdoor industry, drawing connections between the brands that call Wisconsin home, the outdoor recreation activities they support and the communities in which we recreate. Using the feedback gathered from hundreds of industry stakeholder touchpoints, the Office has made huge strides in a short amount of time:

"Outdoor Recreation: A Top Driver of Wisconsin's Economy"

A first-of-its kind report for Wisconsin prepared by an independent, nonpartisan research firm, shows outdoor recreation's impacts.

Wisconsin Trail Report

The Wisconsin Trail Report, like Travel Wisconsin's popular Snow and Fall Color Reports, lists current conditions for hiking & biking trail networks to help travelers discover their next adventure.

Outdoor Business Directory

The Outdoor Business Directory, a first for Wisconsin's outdoor businesses and organizations, aims to connect this large and diverse industry.

Research Library

The Research Library catalogs reports and research that detail the benefits and trends of outdoor recreation both nationally and in Wisconsin.



WISCONSIN OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION (CONT.)



Educational webinars

Industry-responsive educational webinars on topics including how to access federal funds, connections to rural economic development and more.

Outdoors COVID-19 Toolkits

Outdoors COVID-19 Toolkits in partnership with the Department of Health Services and the Department of Natural Resources when outdoor participation skyrocketed at the onset of the pandemic.

Outdoor brands

Wisconsin outdoor brands secured by the Office used in Travel Wisconsin campaign productions.

Wisconsin Outside

Monthly email newsletter, Wisconsin Outside, documents and amplifies demonstrated examples of partnerships, collaborations and projects that advance outdoor recreation, as well as important news and resources for stakeholders to utilize.

Backpacker Magazine Get Out More TV series

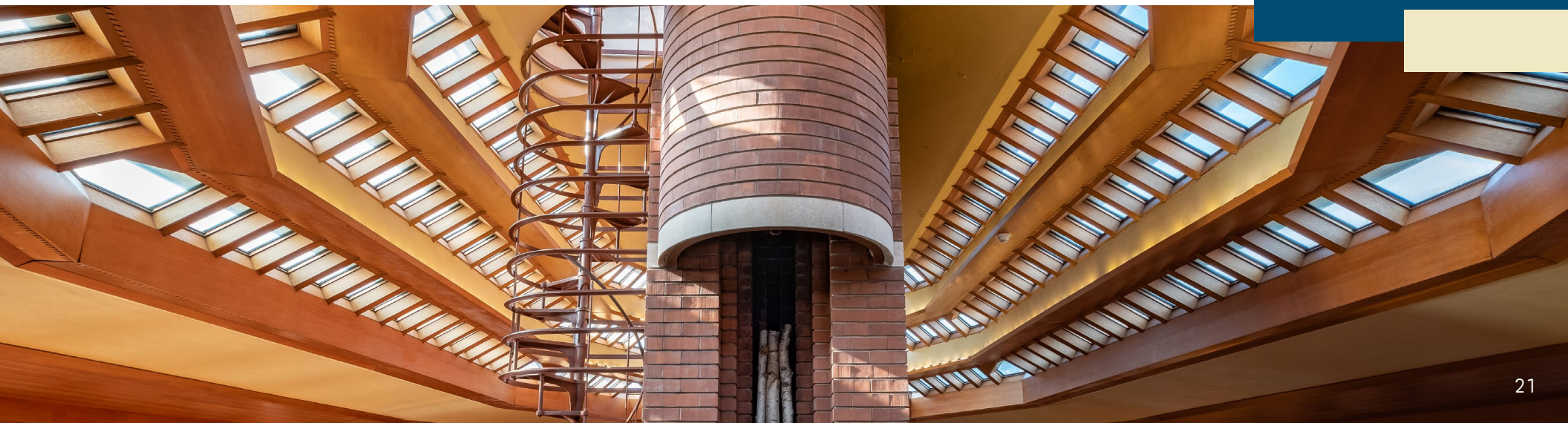
Tourism partners and outdoor recreation businesses connected with Travel Wisconsin to secure Wisconsin as the only Midwest destination for an episode of Backpacker Magazine's Get Out More TV series.

The Department has long recognized the importance of outdoor recreation to Wisconsin's tourism industry. That's why the Office was created. And as one of just two Offices of Outdoor Recreation in the country housed in a Department of Tourism, this unique structure provides added benefits to our partners as well as efficiencies among our lean teams as we both work to drive economic impact.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT TRAIL

Since its launch in 2017, the Frank Lloyd Wright Trail has garnered worldwide media coverage and drawn travelers from near and far. To help more travelers experience the Frank Lloyd Wright Trail, new informational rack cards were developed in fiscal year 2020 to highlight each of the stops on the trail and provides a central location for contact information for each stop. The rack cards were distributed at each of the stops on the Frank Lloyd Wright Trail and Travel Wisconsin Welcome Centers throughout the state.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Trail continues to be a valuable storytelling opportunity for Travel Wisconsin with features in our [Hidden Gem Slow TV video](#), 11 social media posts, four travel guides, three TravelWisconsin.com articles and 14 earned media placements in outlets including [Apartment Therapy](#), [Livability](#), [Reader's Digest](#) and more. Upon sending the influencers from the blog [HoneyTrek](#) to Taliesin they recounted, "The moment that struck us most was standing before his desk and thinking about all the revolutionary ideas that transpired on that simple slab of wood. Our tour guide was excellent, the grounds beautiful, and the interiors a dream. Taliesin is a must, and if you have more time, make all nine stops along Wisconsin's Frank Lloyd Wright Trail."



TRIBAL TOURISM

The Department of Tourism is proud to help travelers experience the distinct traditions and learn about the cultural heritage of Wisconsin's 11 federally recognized tribal nations. Native culture is woven into the fabric of our state and provides incredible experiences for travelers to enjoy. A few of the ways we promoted these experiences include, nine social media posts, two travel guides, five TravelWisconsin.com articles and 13 earned media placements in outlets including [Forbes](#), [Rachel Ray In Season](#), [WTMJ radio](#) and more.

Forbes

How To Bring More Native American Ingredients To Your Thanksgiving Menu



Claudia Alarcón Contributor @
Dining

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~ 16 min

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OFFICE OF MARKETING SERVICES

The Office of Marketing Services (OMS) provides marketing consultation services to other agencies of Wisconsin State Government. Through our office, agencies can access skilled staff and resources to help bring those big ideas to life, whether the event includes hundreds of in-person attendees or the technology needed for a virtual conference. Our target customers are all agencies, councils, commissions and boards of Wisconsin State Government.

Following is a list of some of the projects we've worked on in FY 2020 and 2021:

2020 & 2022 Governor's Conference on Emergency Management - Emergency Management

2020, 2021 and 2022 Governor's Conference on Tourism

2020 & 2021 Wisconsin Fall Conference on Tourism

Meetings & Conventions Marketing Oversight - Department of Tourism

Sports Marketing Oversight - Department of Tourism

2020 Cold Case Conference - Department of Justice

2020 & 2021 Governor's Conference on Highway Safety - Department of Transportation

Travel Wisconsin Co-op Marketing Programs - Department of Tourism

2020 & 2021 Virtual Procurement Conference - Department of Administration

CRM Project Oversight - Department of Tourism

2020 Deer Hunting Promo - Department of Natural Resources

2021 Society of American Travel Writers Reception - Department of Tourism

2020 Broadband Report - Public Service Commission



DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM MARKETING EXPENDITURES



RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020

Category	Amount	% of Total
Advertising	5,286,500	60.26
Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grants	1,190,800	13.57
E-marketing/Tourism Website	562,900	6.42
Public Relations	461,500	5.26
Other Grants	329,700	3.76
Tourism Impacts Research	242,900	2.77
Customer Service/Publications	207,400	2.36
Multicultural Marketing Program	200,000	2.28
Travel Wisconsin Welcome Centers	170,200	1.94
Association Dues and Miscellaneous	121,000	1.38
Total	\$8,772,900	100%

Expenditures do not include encumbered or other unexpended amounts transferred to FY 2021 under the biennial expenditure authority for marketing. More funding from FY 2020 was carried over than typical due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, marketing funding of \$104,000 GPR and \$448,400 tribal gaming PR was lapsed in FY 2020 due to statewide expenditure reductions required by the Governor and administration due to the pandemic.

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM MARKETING EXPENDITURES



RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021

Category	Amount	% of Total
Advertising	12,860,870.21	45.29
Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grants	768,290.94	2.71
E-marketing / Tourism Website	594,624.04	2.09
Public Relations	1,284,997.57	4.53
Other Grants	12,082,090.72	42.55
Tourism Impacts Research	261,000.00	0.92
Customer Service / Publications	189,587.47	0.67
Multicultural Marketing Program	200,000.00	0.70
Travel Wisconsin Welcome Centers	133,729.41	0.47
Association Dues and Miscellaneous	21,394.00	0.07
Total	\$28,396,584.36	100%

Total reflects the Federal CARES / TRAVEL Grant program in Other Grants. Expenditures do not include encumbered or other unexpended amounts. The numbers reflect the FY 2020 funding carry over which was more than typical due to disruptions cause by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Wisconsin Department of Tourism

3319 W Beltline Hwy | PO Box 8690

Madison, WI 53708-8690

(800) 432-8747

Travel Wisconsin Social Media



Tourism Industry Social Media



The Wisconsin Department of Tourism would like to thank decision makers, agency partners, members of the Wisconsin Council on Tourism, committee members and industry stakeholders for supporting our mission to inspire travelers to experience Wisconsin.

