

Building Bridges: From Funding Risk to Social Value

Social Impact Committee Virtual Roundtable – September 2025



Dana Middleton

Director, Impact and Culture
MMGY



Ava Wells

Social Impact Manager
Destinations International

Funding is at Risk

42% report funding at risk in the next 3 years
(up from 37% in 2023)

The advocacy imperative:
Destination Organizations need to evolve from passive recipients to assertive champions





What's one bridge your organization has already started to build to connect funding to community value?

Four Pillars of Social Impact



Economic Growth
and Opportunity



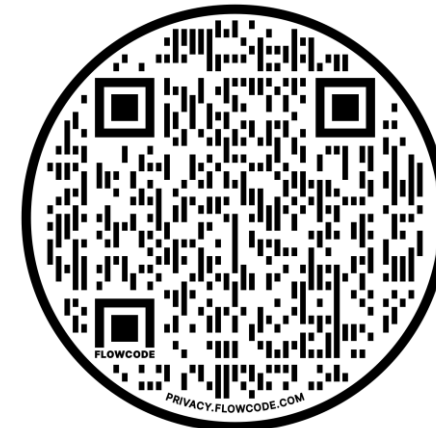
Community Impact
and Well-Being



Responsible Tourism
and Stewardship



Access and
Participation





Reframing Risk as Opportunity (10 minutes)

1. **Discuss a funding risk** – *Scrutiny over use of room taxes*
2. **Reframe the opportunity** – *Tourism funding isn't just about visitors. It strengthens our community by supporting local businesses, building workforce pathways and creating welcoming shared spaces.*
3. **Social Impact Pillar(s) tie-in** – *Economic Growth and Opportunity; Community Impact and Well-Being*
4. **Measure the impact** – *Ex: Percentage of local businesses supported by visitor spending, number of workforce development programs tied to tourism, number of infrastructure projects funded through tourism*



Measuring Social ROI

(10 minutes)

1. **Identify a program or initiative** – *Cultural festival supported by tourism*
2. **Social Impact Pillar(s) tie-in** – *Responsible tourism and stewardship*
3. **Measure success by** – *Ex: Attendance by residents/visitors, percentage of funding reinvested into cultural preservation, resident pride scores*

SOCIAL IMPACT LEXICON

2024 United States Edition



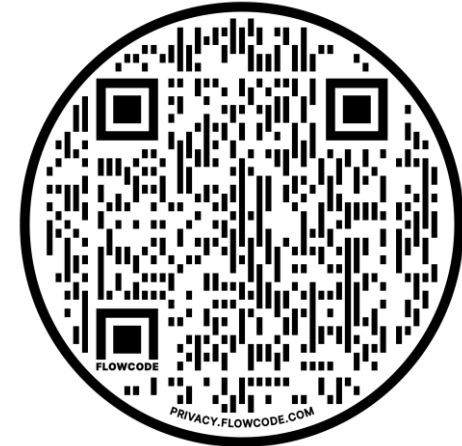
Community	Everyone	Welcome	Future	Care
Opportunity	Together	Believe	Space	Resident
Change	Place	Home	Impact	Safety
Support	Forward			
Provide	Access			



THE TOURISM LEXICON: 2024 United States Edition



community	work	need	service	program
change	support	help	people	opportunity
together	future	building	bring	home
believe	appreciate	family	understand	access
involved	available	welcome	resource	significant





Shifting to Assertive Storytelling (10 minutes)

1. **Choose a funding risk** – *Scrutiny over use of room taxes*
2. **Build your pitch** – *Incorporate words from Tourism and Social Impact Lexicons*

We are Building Bridges Together by...

- Flipping **funding risks** into **opportunities**
- Mapping **programs to social ROI measures**
- Practiced turning defensive messaging into **assertive champion pitches** using both the Tourism and Social Impact Lexicons