

Bourbon Is Only The Beginning



Louisville Tourism
2026-2027
Destination Sales & Marketing Plan



Bourbon is Only the Beginning: Navigating Louisville's Next Chapter

Louisville enters Fiscal Year 2026–27 from a position of strength—and at a defining moment for our destination. Across the visitor economy, we continue to see momentum fueled by authentic experiences, strong partner collaboration, and a destination brand that resonates with travelers seeking something genuine and memorable.

Over the past year, Louisville welcomed millions of visitors through conventions, sporting events, festivals, leisure travel, and business meetings. These conventions, tournaments, and cultural experiences demonstrated our city's ability to host events at every scale while delivering the hospitality that defines Louisville. There were 543 hosted events in 2025 with an economic impact of \$984 million with 645 forecast for 2026 taking the impact to over \$1 billion. Add in the leisure business and we pack an economic punch over \$4.5 billion.

Our latest visitor research reinforces what we've long believed: visitors value Louisville for its authenticity, affordability, and welcoming spirit. They stay longer, spend more, and—most importantly—they return. That loyalty is both a testament to the experiences our community creates and a reminder that our greatest opportunity lies in turning first-time visitors into lifelong advocates.

As we look ahead, Louisville Tourism's focus is clear: prepare our destination for its next chapter of growth. The year ahead represents one of the most exciting periods of investment and transformation in Louisville's recent history. New hotel development, expanded convention infrastructure, nationally significant cultural attractions, and once-in-a-generation anniversaries are creating fresh reasons for visitors to choose Louisville—and for those who have been here before to experience it in an entirely new way. From the world's most inclusive museum at the DOT Experience to the Speed Art Museum's centennial celebration, from the new Sons of the American Revolution Museum & Education Center during America's 250th anniversary to continued investment along our waterfront and downtown, Louisville is expanding the stories we have to tell. Our guiding platform, Bourbon is Only the Beginning, has never been more relevant. Bourbon remains Louisville's most recognizable asset and a powerful invitation for travelers around the world. But increasingly, visitors discover that it is only the beginning of the experience. They find an acclaimed culinary scene, vibrant neighborhoods, live music, arts and culture, outdoor spaces, iconic sporting events, and authentic encounters with the people who make Louisville unlike anywhere else.



This year's plan reflects that broader vision. We will continue investing in our core leisure, meetings, sports, and international markets while strengthening destination engagement, expanding visitor services, supporting new tourism experiences, and creating more opportunities for local businesses to benefit from visitor spending. Just as importantly, we will continue connecting visitors with the people, places, and experiences that define Louisville—and ensuring those experiences inspire them to return.

Tourism remains one of Louisville's most powerful economic development tools. It supports local businesses, creates jobs, generates tax revenue, attracts investment, and shapes how our city is perceived around the world. The work ahead is not simply about attracting more visitors. It is about building a destination that continues to create lasting value for our residents, our businesses, and future generations.

The future of Louisville tourism has never been brighter. Together, we are building a destination that honors its heritage, embraces innovation, and continues to surprise and delight visitors long after they discover that bourbon is only the beginning.

Cheers to another year of growth, collaboration, and the spirit of Bourbon City

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cleo Battle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cleo" being more prominent than the last name "Battle".

Cleo Battle, Louisville Tourism President & CEO



CONVENTION MARKETS (MEETINGS AND EVENTS)

Market Overview

Louisville's convention brand is at an all-time high. The hosting of industry events in the past couple of years including PCMA edUcon, Connect Marketplace, Maritz, and ConferenceDirect have demonstrated Louisville's ability to successfully deliver large-scale meetings and industry gatherings.

The meetings industry remains active and resilient, though planners are placing greater emphasis on value, affordability, attendee engagement, and measurable return on investment. Organizations continue to source and book meetings, but with increased scrutiny around participation levels, budgets, and program design. These priorities align closely with Louisville's strengths: an accessible and walkable downtown, robust convention infrastructure, competitive pricing, and authentic experiences that enhance attendee satisfaction.

Louisville continues to perform well in this environment, with year-to-date room nights and booked events outpacing the previous year. This past fiscal year saw 996,394 future booked nights over last fiscal's 971,702 representing a 2.5% increase and a 18% increase in hosted events (645 in this fiscal over 543 previously).

As attendees become more selective about where they invest their time and travel dollars, destinations that offer meaningful experiences alongside strong meeting facilities are gaining a competitive advantage. Louisville is uniquely positioned to meet that demand.

Target Audience

Primary: National and regional meeting planners, corporate meeting managers, association professionals, sports event rights holders, and event organizers.

Secondary: Association executives, CEOs, industry influencers, and organizational decision-makers.

Third-Party Intermediaries: HelmsBriscoe, ConferenceDirect, Maritz Global Events, HPN Global, and other strategic sourcing partners.

Messaging Strategy

Louisville's convention package will continue to leverage:

- A walkable downtown with a concentrated collection of hotels, restaurants, attractions, and venues.
- The Kentucky International Convention Center and ongoing investment in the Kentucky Exposition Center.
- Louisville's reputation for hospitality, affordability, and exceptional service.
- Unique venues and experiences that connect attendees to the city's culture, including distilleries, museums, waterfront attractions, and historic venues.
- The "Bourbon is Only the Beginning" platform, showcasing how bourbon serves as a gateway to Louisville's broader culinary, cultural, entertainment, and business assets.



Industry Overview & Trends

Meeting planners continue to seek destinations that provide a strong balance of affordability, accessibility, and attendee experience. Experience-driven meetings are becoming increasingly important, with organizations incorporating local culture, culinary experiences, and off-site activities into event programming.

Budget pressures remain a factor across all market segments, creating opportunities for destinations that can deliver high-quality experiences while controlling costs. Louisville's combination of walkability, value, and authentic experiences positions the destination well to capitalize on these evolving expectations.

Additionally, planners increasingly expect destination marketing organizations to serve as strategic partners throughout the planning process, helping simplify logistics, connect local resources, and enhance attendee engagement. Louisville Tourism will continue to evolve its services to meet these expectations by providing consultative support before, during, and after events.

Tactical Approach

Industry Partnerships: Maintain strong partnerships with ASAE, MPI, PCMA, CVENT, IAEE, Association Forum, Maritz Global Events, ConferenceDirect, HelmsBriscoe, and other industry organizations. These relationships remain the foundation for lead generation, brand awareness, and long-term client engagement.

Client Engagement:

- Host invitation-only client events and activations in key markets including Chicago, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and New York.
- Expand Louisville Immersion Tours and customized site visits for high-value prospects.
- Conduct targeted sales missions focused on association, corporate, and third-party intermediary clients.
- Utilize major industry events as opportunities for one-on-one appointments, networking, and lead development.

Strategic Trade Show Presence

Maintain a strong presence at industry-leading events including IMEX America, PCMA Convening Leaders, ASAE Annual Meeting, MPI WEC, IAEE Expo! Expo!, Sports ETA Symposium, Connect Marketplace, and Cvent Connect.

In addition to exhibit participation, Louisville Tourism will continue to host client dinners, bourbon experiences, educational sessions, and networking events designed to strengthen relationships and generate new opportunities.

Content & Communication

- Develop convention-focused communications highlighting new hotels, attractions, venue improvements, and destination developments.
- Share client success stories and case studies that demonstrate Louisville's ability to deliver strong attendance and attendee satisfaction.
- Expand LinkedIn and digital marketing efforts targeted directly at meeting professionals and event decision-makers.
- Support sales efforts with customized industry-specific presentations and materials.

Key Development Strategies

Promote Louisville's Value Proposition

Position Louisville as a destination that delivers exceptional attendee experiences without the costs associated with larger Tier 1 convention markets. Emphasize affordability, accessibility, walkability, and return on investment throughout the sales process.

Expand Planner Partnership Services

Continue evolving Louisville Tourism's role beyond site selection by providing strategic support throughout event development, attendee engagement, housing services, local partner connections, and on-site execution.

Leverage Authentic Experiences

Incorporate bourbon, culinary, music, sports, and cultural experiences into sales presentations, site visits, and event planning conversations to demonstrate how Louisville can help organizations increase attendance and attendee satisfaction.

Drive Meetings in Growth Markets

Leverage strong regional relationships and proximity to key feeder states to secure regional association meetings, corporate events, and sports competitions.

Engage Local Corporations & Knowledge Hubs

Work closely with Louisville-based corporations, healthcare systems, universities, logistics leaders, manufacturers, and bourbon industry partners to attract meetings and conferences aligned with the city's economic strengths.

Activate Need Periods

Jefferson County lodging performance highlights significant opportunities during late summer, late fall, and winter months. While September, and October continue to generate strong demand and premium rates, January, February, August, and December remain key periods for future growth.

Louisville Tourism will focus convention sales efforts on filling these need periods through targeted incentives, citywide opportunities, sports events, and association business. By aligning sales strategies with hotel demand patterns, the destination can protect peak-period revenue while generating new visitation during historically softer periods.

Target Experience-Driven Meetings

Focus sales efforts on organizations seeking destinations that offer meaningful local experiences, strong networking opportunities, and memorable attendee engagement. Louisville's blend of authenticity, accessibility, and hospitality makes it well-positioned to capture this growing segment of the meetings market.



Regional Directors' Key Role

Regional Directors remain focused on generating qualified sales leads, securing tentative room nights, and representing Louisville within their respective territories.

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office – DC/VA/MD

Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Maryland remain key association markets. Louisville Tourism will continue annual Derby-related activations and strategic partnerships with organizations such as MPI Potomac to strengthen relationships and generate new opportunities.

Midwest Regional Office – Chicago

The Midwest territory includes Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, and Northern California. The team will continue popular Bourbon Heritage Month activations while introducing new engagement opportunities throughout the year.

Northeast Regional Office

Covering New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and Delaware, the Northeast team will significantly expand activity in the New York market, leveraging increased destination visibility and complementary consumer marketing efforts.

Southeast Regional Office – Atlanta

Covering Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Texas, the Southeast office will continue targeting corporate, scientific, engineering, healthcare, and technology sectors while leveraging signature events such as The Art of Bourbon to strengthen client relationships.

SERVICES SUPPORT FOR CONVENTIONS & EVENTS

Overview

The Destination Services team delivers industry-leading customer service to meeting planners and event organizers through strategic services, community connections, attendance-building initiatives, and creative solutions that enhance the overall attendee experience.

The positive economic and cultural impact of meetings, conventions, sporting events, and festivals continues to be one of Louisville's greatest strengths. In the coming year, over 600 events are expected to bring over 3.5 million attendees to the city, creating significant economic impact while showcasing Louisville's hospitality, culture, and distinct sense of place.

Louisville's portfolio of legacy events remains a cornerstone of the destination's meetings and events economy, including TFN's Run 4 Roses, Equip Exposition, Bourbon & Beyond, and Louder Than Life. Additional hallmark events such as the National Farm Machinery Show & Championship Tractor Pull, Mid-America Trucking Show, Junior Volleyball Association World Challenge, and the National Archery in the Schools Program continue to generate substantial visitor volume and overnight stays.

Building on the momentum of recent industry showcases and national meetings hosted in Louisville, the Destination Services team will focus on creating experiences that demonstrate Bourbon is Only the Beginning. By connecting attendees to Louisville's authentic neighborhoods, culinary scene, bourbon culture, arts, entertainment, and local expertise, we will help event organizers deliver memorable experiences that drive attendance, satisfaction, and repeat visitation.

Key Strategies

Advancing Social, Environmental and Community

Impact: The Leave a Legacy corporate social responsibility program will continue connecting incoming groups with Louisville-based nonprofits, community organizations, and service projects. The program will prioritize opportunities that align with Louisville Tourism's destination values while creating meaningful and measurable impact for local residents.

Destination Services will expand its focus on social, environmental, and economic sustainability by helping meeting planners incorporate responsible event practices into their programs. Through partnerships with local stakeholders, we will create impactful engagement opportunities that strengthen neighborhoods, support community priorities, and leave a positive legacy long after attendees return home.

Driving Attendance and Enhancing Planner Value:

Today's planners need more than logistics support—they need strategic partners who help drive attendance and create memorable experiences. Leveraging visitor research and destination insights, the Destination Services team will connect event audiences with Louisville's signature experiences, including bourbon, culinary offerings, live music, sports, arts, and authentic local attractions.

We will continue enhancing attendance-building tools, visitor-facing resources, and promotional opportunities that help planners communicate the value of attending their event in Louisville. In addition, post-event evaluation processes will be refined to provide more actionable client feedback and deeper insights that support continuous service improvement.

Strengthening Industry and Community

Connections: Working in partnership with the Strategic Alliances team, Destination Services will help expand opportunities for local businesses to engage with convention attendees, event organizers, and visitors. Through Louisville Tourism's evolving Destination Engagement Program, local businesses will have greater access to resources and exposure through advertising, sponsorship, targeted marketing programs, networking events, and educational resources designed to increase visibility and business connections.

Signature recognition and networking programs—including the Annual Gala, ROSE Awards, Destination Louisville: State of the Tourism Industry, the Hospitality Expo and 78 Social—will continue celebrating hospitality excellence and fostering destination ambassadorship. Additional opportunities will be developed to connect attendees with Louisville businesses, neighborhoods, and local experiences in meaningful ways.

Enhancing the Attendee Experience

Providing exceptional visitor experiences remains central to Louisville's competitive advantage. The Destination Services team will continue expanding programs and services that make visiting Louisville easier, more engaging, and more memorable for attendees.

Housing services will remain an important value-added offering for eligible groups, helping planners streamline the attendee experience while maximizing hotel participation. The team will also explore opportunities to support large-scale spectator events and festivals through housing and visitor service solutions.

In partnership with community stakeholders, Louisville Tourism will continue advocating for initiatives that improve navigation, placemaking, visitor information, safety, and overall destination appeal. These efforts help ensure Louisville remains welcoming, vibrant, and easy to experience for both first-time and repeat visitors.

Legacy Organizations & Notable Events

Legacy status is reserved for organizations with a proven record of impact, reach, and commitment to Louisville. In FY 2026–27, Louisville will host this distinguished group along with other notable events including:

Conventions & Tradeshows:

- International Association of Fairs and Expositions (Nov 2026)
- Kentucky State Fair and World's Championship Horse Show (Aug 2026)
- Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Thought Leaders Summit (Aug 2026)
- Mid-America Trucking Show (Mar 2027)
- National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals (Dec 2026)
- National Farm Machinery Show & Championship Tractor Pull (Feb 2027)
- National League of Cities Summer Board Meeting (Jul 2026)
- National Street Rod Association – 57th Annual Street Rod Nationals (Aug 2026)
- North American International Livestock Expo & Championship Rodeo (Nov 2026)
- Outdoor Power Equipment Institute – Equip Exposition (Oct 2026)
- The American Legion 2026 National Convention (Aug 2026)

Sporting Events & Festivals:

- Under Armour Bluegrass Volleyball Tournament (Mar 2027)
- Danny Wimmer Presents
 - Bourbon & Beyond (Sept 2026)
 - Louder Than Life (Sept 2026)
- Educational Theatre Association 2027 International Thespian Festival (June 2027)
- Junior Volleyball Association - World Challenge (Apr 2027)
- Kentucky Derby Festival (Apr 2027)
- National Archery in the Schools Program – Eastern National Tournament (May 2027)
- NCAA Division I Men's Basketball First/Second Rounds (Mar 2027)
- St. James Court Art Show (Oct 2026)
- TFN Camps & Clinics
 - Run 4 Roses (July 2026)
 - Grassroots Championship (July 2026)
 - Select Summer Championship (July 2026)
 - The Classic (May 2027)
 - Grassroots Showcase (April 2027)
- USA BMX Derby City Nationals (Sept 2026)
- Varsity Brands – WSF Louisville Grand Nationals (Dec 2026)



STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Overview

Strategic Alliances serves as Louisville Tourism's bridge between the hospitality industry and local businesses. The team fosters connections that strengthen destination readiness, increase industry collaboration, and create meaningful opportunities for local businesses to engage with visitors, meeting planners, and one another. Through professional development, networking, destination advocacy, and strategic partnerships, Strategic Alliances helps ensure Louisville's tourism ecosystem remains informed, connected, and positioned for growth.

Key Strategies

Strengthen Destination Ambassadors and Industry Engagement

Continue to grow 78 Social as Louisville's premier destination ambassador and professional development network. Expand opportunities for networking, endorsed learning, and behind-the-scenes access to tourism assets, equipping participants to confidently advocate for Louisville and support a welcoming visitor experience.

Expand Local Business Activation and Investment Opportunities

Enhance Louisville Tourism's business engagement model by creating flexible opportunities for hospitality and community partners to connect with each other and visitors, meeting planners, convention attendees, and leisure travelers. Leverage Louisville Tourism-owned platforms, events, advertising and sponsorship opportunities, visitor centers, and digital channels to provide targeted engagement opportunities that align with individual business objectives.

Connect Visitors to Louisville's Knowledge Hubs and Industries

Strengthen relationships between incoming meetings and Louisville's key business sectors—including bourbon, healthcare, logistics, manufacturing, sports, and education—to create authentic local connections, enrich attendee experiences, and increase economic impact throughout the community.

Invest in Community-Led Tourism Development

Support the development of new tourism experiences, events, and community initiatives that have the potential to generate overnight visitation, enhance the visitor experience and showcase Louisville's neighborhoods, culture, and unique sense of place. Prioritize projects that align with destination development goals and enhance the visitor experience.

Build Industry Readiness for Future Growth

Equip local businesses with timely visitor insights, destination trends, and educational resources to help them capitalize on Louisville's expanding hotel inventory, growing event calendar, and evolving visitor expectations. Foster stronger industry collaboration to ensure Louisville is prepared to welcome more visitors and deliver exceptional experiences.



LEISURE MARKETS

Market Overview

Louisville's leisure travel strategy is built on a strong foundation of visitation, brand recognition, and visitor satisfaction. Recent visitor research continues to demonstrate that Louisville delivers on the experiences travelers seek most: authentic culture, memorable culinary experiences, iconic bourbon attractions, and genuine hospitality. Repeat visitation remains one of Louisville's greatest competitive advantages, reinforcing the importance of a strategy that balances attracting new visitors while continually giving past guests a reason to return.

While recent headlines point to softer bourbon bottle sales, that trend does not tell the full story of bourbon tourism. Production and retail sales are different from travel demand, and Kentucky's Bourbon Country continues to gain global attention as visitors seek out distillery tours, tasting rooms, culinary pairings, events, and authentic behind-the-scenes experiences. Louisville is uniquely positioned as both the gateway and the hub of that bourbon experience. At the same time, our opportunity extends well beyond bourbon. Visitors increasingly seek destinations that offer multiple experiences in a single trip—food, festivals, outdoor recreation, museums and cultural attractions, sports, and authentic local connections. Louisville is well-positioned to meet that demand.

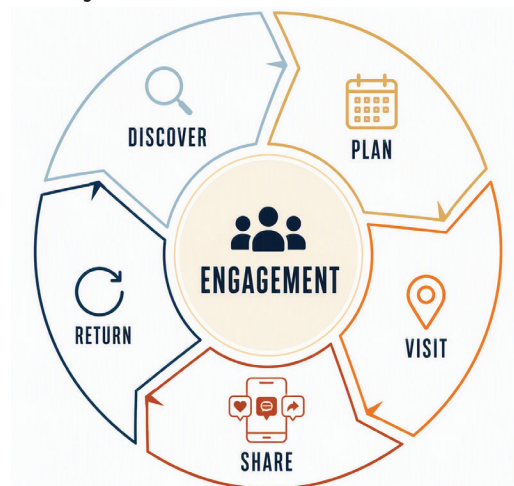
In FY 2026–27, our focus will be on growing market share in established feeder markets, expanding awareness in high-potential growth markets, increasing visitation during need periods, and strengthening Louisville's reputation as a destination where Bourbon is Only the Beginning.

General Consumer Marketing Strategy

Building a Visitor Lifecycle, Not Just a Funnel

Louisville Tourism's marketing strategy continues to evolve beyond a traditional awareness-to-booking funnel toward a visitor lifecycle model that reflects how travelers engage with destinations today.

Visitor Lifecycle



This approach recognizes that the visitor journey does not end when a trip concludes. Every visitor interaction should inspire social sharing, positive word-of-mouth, destination advocacy, and ultimately another visit.

Acquisition + Retention = Sustainable Growth

Repeat visitors remain among Louisville's most valuable audiences. They stay longer, explore more of the destination, spend more broadly, and serve as trusted advocates among family and friends.

At the same time, attracting new visitors remains essential as Louisville prepares for increased hotel inventory and expanded tourism capacity. Marketing and Sales investments will focus on creating awareness in growth markets, converting travelers actively considering a trip, and keeping Louisville top-of-mind with past visitors through engaging content and personalized communications.

Our integrated marketing mix will include:

- Paid advertising (digital, streaming, print, out of home)
- Public relations and earned media
- Influencer & creator partnerships
- Content & email marketing
- Social media engagement
- Cooperative marketing programs
- Travel trade initiatives
- Strategic brand partnerships

The overarching brand platform remains Bourbon is Only the Beginning, using bourbon as the entry point while showcasing Louisville's culinary scene, festivals, sports, music, cultural attractions, neighborhoods, and local personalities.

Target Audience

Primary: Adults 25–54, with particular emphasis on Millennials and Gen X travelers seeking short getaways, authentic experiences, and memory-making travel opportunities.

- Couples and friend groups
- Families traveling together
- Culinary and bourbon enthusiasts
- Event-driven travelers
- Experience seekers in culture, food, music and entertainment
- Higher-than-average household incomes
- Strong propensity for repeat visitation

Motivations: Weekend getaway, special events, bourbon experiences, culinary exploration, visiting friends & family, sports & entertainment, seasonal travel experiences, area attraction, and family friendly activities.

Target Markets

Growth Markets

Established markets with strong brand awareness, significant visitation, and repeat travel potential.

Atlanta, Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbus, Indianapolis, Nashville

Strategy: Maintain an always-on presence while using seasonal creative to promote new experiences, major events, and reasons to return. Emphasis will be placed on repeat visitation messaging, road-trip inspiration, culinary tourism, and bourbon experiences.

Opportunity Markets

Markets supported by favorable demographics, strong air connectivity or drivability, and long-term growth potential.

Boston, Charleston (WV), Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Raleigh/Durham, New York, Washington D.C.

Strategy: Deploy awareness-building campaigns that introduce Louisville's broader destination story while leveraging bourbon as the lead attraction. Partnerships with airlines, travel platforms, and destination marketing partners will help accelerate market penetration.



Messaging Strategy

Brand Platform:

Bourbon is Only the Beginning: Bourbon remains Louisville's most powerful differentiator, but marketing will increasingly highlight the experiences visitors discover once they arrive.

Key Messages

- **Authentic:** A destination rooted in real stories, local traditions, and unforgettable experiences.
- **Accessible:** An easy-to-reach destination offering exceptional value compared to competing urban destinations.
- **Unexpected:** Visitors consistently discover experiences that exceed expectations—from food and music to neighborhoods and outdoor recreation.
- **Repeatable:** Louisville is never the same destination twice. New restaurants, attractions, festivals, and experiences continually create reasons to return.

Tactics

Paid Advertising

Always-On Digital: Maintain continuous digital visibility in key feeder markets using audience targeting based on interest, intent, and travel behaviors.

Seasonal Campaigns: Deploy targeted campaigns around key travel periods including: Derby season, Summer travel, Bourbon Heritage Month, and Fall festivals.

Connected TV & Video: Expand investment in streaming and video channels to build brand awareness among high-value travelers and inspire trip planning.

Out of Home: Maintain strategic placements in core drive markets while exploring innovative digital and experiential opportunities in priority air markets.

Travel Partnerships: Continue strategic relationships with online travel agencies and booking platforms while evaluating new conversion-focused partnerships designed to drive overnight stays.

Regional Drive Campaigns: Promote road-trip themed itineraries in spring/summer for travelers within 5 hours, and showcase seasonal events, bourbon trails, and culinary weekends.

Content Marketing

What's New in Louisville: Continue developing content that gives repeat visitors fresh reasons to return, highlighting new restaurants, attractions, festivals, hotels, and neighborhood developments.

Local Storytelling: Elevate local chefs, distillers, artists, musicians, entrepreneurs, and makers who help define Louisville's authentic character.

Interest Based Content: Develop deeper content around bourbon, culinary experiences, family travel, sports tourism, music, outdoor recreation, and museums & cultural attractions.

Email Marketing

Strategy: Focus on lifecycle marketing that nurtures travelers before, during, and after their visits.

Key Priorities Include: Audience segmentation, personalized messaging, repeat visitation campaigns, event-driven travel opportunities, seasonal inspiration, and accessibility- ease in planning & exceptional value.

Social Media

Strategy: Continue social platforms as a primary storytelling and engagement channel to inspire travel.

Priorities Include: Short-form video, creator partnerships, user-generated content, real-time event coverage, community storytelling, and destination inspiration.

Platform emphasis will include Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and emerging channels where travel audiences continue to engage.

Leisure Development Sales Strategies

- Grow Louisville Tourism’s owned consumer database in both established and emerging markets.
- Expand in-market activations that support awareness efforts and collect qualified visitor leads.
- Continue growing LouGrass and other destination-owned programming that encourages visitation during strategic periods.
- Develop cooperative opportunities that allow local partners to participate more directly in consumer marketing initiatives.
- Create additional opportunities to showcase Louisville’s neighborhoods and independently owned businesses through targeted consumer campaigns.

NICHE / AFFINITY MARKETS - BLACK TRAVEL & LGBTQ+

Market Overview

Louisville’s welcoming reputation, authentic cultural scene, and diverse visitor experiences position the destination well for travelers seeking destinations where they feel represented, respected, and connected to local culture.

Marketing efforts will continue to highlight Louisville’s inclusive spirit while focusing on the experiences that unite visitors across demographic groups: bourbon, food, arts, music, festivals, and authentic community connections.

Black and LGBTQ travel will remain priority markets.

Key Marketing Strategies

- Ensure representation in creative assets, partnerships, and storytelling.
- Highlight experiences and events that celebrate Louisville’s diverse communities.
- Promote inclusive bourbon, culinary, arts, and cultural experiences.
- Strengthen partnerships with trusted organizations, media outlets, and influencers serving affinity travel audiences.
- Support destination-wide efforts that reinforce welcoming experiences at every visitor touchpoint.

Tactics

- Targeted media partnerships serving affinity audiences.
- Event activations in priority feeder markets.
- Influencer and creator collaborations.
- Curated itineraries focused on culture, history, cuisine, and community.
- Continued hospitality education and training opportunities for industry partners.



TRAVEL TRADE

Domestic

Market Overview

Group leisure travel continues to be a significant opportunity for Louisville as tour operators seek destinations offering flexible itineraries, strong value, and multiple experiences within a compact footprint.

Marketing Strategies

- Position Louisville as a customizable multi-day destination.
- Expand relationships with tour operators and motorcoach companies serving key regional markets.
- Highlight Louisville's ability to combine bourbon, culinary, cultural, sports, and seasonal experiences into packaged itineraries.

Tactics

- Continued presence at key industry marketplaces and trade shows.
- Familiarization tours showcasing both iconic and emerging experiences.
- Cooperative sales missions with state and regional partners.
- Strategic booking incentives during need periods.
- Development of themed itineraries designed for repeat group visitation.

International

Market Overview

International visitation remains a long-term growth opportunity for Louisville, particularly in markets with strong interest in bourbon, American culture, culinary travel, and heritage tourism.

The United Kingdom and Germany remain priority markets, while Canada continues to represent a strategic opportunity because of proximity, awareness, and air service potential.

Marketing Strategies

Elevate Louisville as the Gateway to Kentucky's Bourbon Country

Use bourbon's international recognition to introduce Louisville to travelers who may be unfamiliar with the broader destination offering.

Expand Beyond Bourbon

Position Louisville's culinary scene, music, architecture, sports, Derby heritage, and cultural attractions as reasons to extend stays and explore more deeply.

Grow Trade and Media Advocacy

Strengthen relationships with tour operators, travel advisors, media, and content creators who influence international travel decisions.

Tactics

- Continue representation programs in the United Kingdom and Germany.
- Maintain strategic participation in international trade shows and sales missions.
- Leverage partnerships with Brand USA, U.S. Travel Association, and Travel South USA.
- Host qualified international media and travel trade familiarization tours.
- Continue leveraging London Cocktail Week, Epsom Derby, Solheim Cup and other international activations to position Louisville as America's premier bourbon destination.

VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Overview

Visitor Experiences is where Louisville's brand comes to life. Every interaction—whether at the airport, downtown, at a festival, or through a mobile activation—has the power to shape how visitors perceive our city and whether they choose to return.

Recent visitor research continues to reinforce Louisville's strengths as a welcoming, authentic, and affordable destination that delivers memorable experiences. As visitation grows and travelers increasingly seek personalized recommendations and local connections, Louisville Tourism will focus on delivering engaging, high-touch experiences that inspire deeper exploration, longer stays, and repeat visitation.

Our visitor centers and ambassador teams serve as both information resources and destination storytellers, helping travelers uncover the experiences that make Louisville unique—from bourbon and culinary adventures to neighborhoods, arts, attractions, sports, and cultural events. By creating meaningful connections at every touchpoint, we strengthen Louisville's reputation as a destination that exceeds expectations and welcomes visitors back again and again.

Airport Welcome Center

The Airport Welcome Center serves as Louisville's first impression for travelers arriving by air and remains one of the destination's most valuable engagement opportunities.

Key priorities include:

- Deliver personalized recommendations through knowledgeable visitor ambassadors who can tailor suggestions based on visitor interests, trip purpose, and length of stay.
- Highlight Louisville's signature experiences—including bourbon, culinary, sports, arts, and cultural attractions—to encourage visitors to extend their time in market.

- Utilize the center to showcase a distinct sense of place highlighting real-time content to showcase seasonal events, new attractions, and neighborhood experiences.
- Create stronger connections between visitors and local businesses through targeted promotional opportunities and visitor-facing recommendations.

Downtown Visitor Center

The Downtown Visitor Center will continue evolving beyond a traditional information center to become an experience in itself—a welcoming gateway that inspires visitors to explore the city.

Key priorities include:

- Curate immersive and interactive experiences that reflect Louisville's unique brand and personality.
- Develop seasonal activations aligned with key travel motivators, including bourbon experiences, special events, sports tourism, culinary exploration, and leisure travel.
- Expand opportunities for local businesses, attractions, and neighborhoods to engage directly with visitors.
- Continue offering merchandise and locally inspired products that serve as meaningful reminders of the Louisville experience.



Mobile Visitor Center

The Mobile Visitor Center extends Louisville Tourism's reach beyond traditional visitor touchpoints, bringing destination information and engagement directly to festivals, community gatherings, regional events, and neighborhoods.

Key priorities include:

- Expand outreach efforts at major community celebrations, sporting events, and regional tourism markets.
- Increase awareness of Louisville Tourism's role in driving economic impact and supporting local businesses.
- Connect residents with tourism initiatives and destination development efforts that benefit the broader community.
- Serve as a flexible, highly visible platform for promoting Louisville's newest attractions, events, and visitor experiences.

Key Strategies

Deliver Personalized Visitor Experiences

Meet visitors where they are by tailoring recommendations, content, and engagement opportunities based on traveler motivations and interests. Whether visitors are seeking bourbon experiences, family activities, major events, culinary adventures, or weekend getaways, our goal is to provide relevant recommendations that enhance satisfaction and increase time spent exploring Louisville.

Inspire Visitors to Return

Build on Louisville's strong repeat visitation by highlighting new experiences, attractions, restaurants, events, and neighborhood developments through on-site interactions, print materials, digital content, and visitor communications. Position Louisville as a destination that always offers something new to discover.

Drive Economic Impact Through Visitor Referrals

Strategically connect visitors with local businesses, attractions, restaurants, retail districts, and experiences that align with their interests. By encouraging deeper exploration of the destination, Louisville Tourism can help increase visitor spending while supporting the broader hospitality community.

Expand Seasonal and Signature Programming

Continue activating visitor touchpoints around Louisville's signature tourism moments, including Mint Julep Month, Bourbon Heritage Month, Light Up Louisville, Derby season, and other major citywide events. These activations will create timely opportunities to engage visitors and showcase Louisville's evolving experiences.

Create Direct Connections Between Visitors and Partners

Expand opportunities for local businesses, attractions, restaurants, and tourism partners to engage directly with visitors at the Airport Welcome Center, Downtown Visitor Center, and Mobile Visitor Center. Through strategic partnerships, featured experiences, sampling opportunities, and destination storytelling, we will create stronger connections between visitors and the businesses that bring Louisville to life.

Showcase Bourbon is Only the Beginning

Leverage every visitor touchpoint to reinforce Louisville's position as the world's leading urban bourbon destination while encouraging visitors to explore the broader experiences that define the city. From culinary and cultural attractions to sports, music, history, and neighborhoods, visitor services will help tell the complete Louisville story and inspire visitors to discover what lies beyond bourbon.

PROMOTIONAL TRAVEL

Louisville Tourism staff will host out of market events and attend the following key industry meetings, tradeshow, travel markets, pre-promotes and media missions in order to drive business to the destination.

CONVENTION MARKET

CVENT Connect	Nashville, TN	July 2026
Meeting & Incentives Worldwide (M&IW)	Schaumburg, IL	July 2026
AMC Institute – AMC's Engaged	Milwaukee, WI	July 2026
Lamont AXS	Las Vegas, NV	July 2026
DI Annual Meeting	Chicago, IL	July 2026
MPI Regional Business Exchange	Bethesda, MD	July 2026
Destination East	New York, NY	July 2026
ACCESS (Scientific & Engineering Conference)	Las Vegas, NV	July 2026
PCMA NY Event	New York, NY	July 2026
CEMA Summit	Toronto, ON	August 2026
NOA Leadership Summit	Louisville, KY	August 2026
ASAE Annual Conference	Indianapolis, IN	August 2026
Maritz Activate	Kissimmee, FL	August 2026
Connect Marketplace	Tampa, FL	August 2026
CVBReps Summer Social	Washington, DC	August 2026
Midwest Sales Call	Chicago, IL	August 2026
SmartMeetings Women's Summit	Las Vegas, NV	August 2026
HPN HQ Presentation	Phoenix, AZ	September 2026
PCMA Philadelphia Education and Tradeshow Day	Philadelphia, PA	September 2026
Destination Celebration MKE	Milwaukee, WI	September 2026
HPN Annual Conference	Tulum, Mexico	September 2026
IAEE CEIR Predict	Maryland	September 2026
Skift Meetings Forum	New York, NY	September 2026
Solheim Cup	Amsterdam, Netherlands	September 2026
Destination Celebration Indy	Indianapolis, IN	September 2026
Destination Celebration STL	St. Louis, MO	September 2026
CDX26	Anaheim, CA	September 2026
PCMA Heartland Golf + Dine with Destinations	Kansas City, MO	September 2026
PCMA New York Education Day	New York, NY	September 2026
ASAE Summit Awards	Washington, DC	September 2026
IMEX	Las Vegas, NV	October 2026
ATL Bourbon City Social	Atlanta, GA	October 2026
MPI New England Chapter Event	Boston, MA	October 2026
International Bluegrass Music Association	Chattanooga, TN	October 2026
TEAMS Conference	Birmingham, AL	October 2026
DC Fall Sales Mission	Washington, DC	October 2026
PCMA Philadelphia Chapter	Philadelphia, PA	October 2026
Metro NYSAE Synergy Awards & Client Dinner	New York, NY	October 2026
Southeast Sales Call	TBD	October 2026
KSAE Annual Convention	TBD	October 2026

NECVB Reps Client Event	Bretton Woods, NH	November 2026
IAEE Expo! Expo!	San Francisco, CA	November 2026
FICP Annual Meeting	Tampa, FL	November 2026
Etherio Connect + ATL Sales Mission	Atlanta, GA	November 2026
MPI New England Chapter Event	Fort Worth, TX	November 2026
Connect South	Fort Worth, TX	November 2026
Connect Faith	Portland, OR	November 2026
Connect Winter Marketplace	Seattle, WA	November 2026
Service Club Leaders	Alexandria, VA	November 2026
Meetings Live South	Kansas City, MO	November 2026
Midwest Sales Calls	TBD	November 2026
CD Forum	Phoenix, AZ	December 2026
Frankfort Holiday Luncheon	Frankfort, KY	December 2026
Holiday Showcase	Chicago, IL	December 2026
Chicago Client Holiday Brunch – Cindy’s	Chicago, IL	December 2026
IAEE DC Chapter Annual Meeting – Sponsor	Washington, DC	December 2026
National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals	Louisville, KY	December 2026
AMEX GBT Interaction	Orlando, FL	December 2026
Site SE Educational Summit	Birmingham, AL	December 2026
CVBReps Winter Party	Washington, DC	December 2026
PCMA Philadelphia Holiday Event	Philadelphia, PA	December 2026
RCMA	Orlando, FL	January 2027
PCMA Convening Leaders	Miami, FL	January 2027
Northstar Luncheon	Dallas, TX	January 2027
FICP Winter Program/Fuel Forward	Boston, MA	January 2027
Sports ETA CE Summit	San Diego, CA	January 2027
AF Kitchen Cabinet CEO Event	Chicago, IL	February 2027
AMC Institute Annual	Miami, FL	February 2027
Northstar IPEC	TBD	February 2027
ATL St. Valentine Client Event	Atlanta, GA	February 2027
Northstar Luncheon	Charlotte, NC	February 2027
PCMA NY Winter Program	New York, NY	February 2027
Meet NY	New York, NY	February 2027
JCSMS - Join Commission on Sports Medicine	Reno, NV	February 2027
Dallas Sales Call	Dallas, TX	February 2027
Executive Women’s Forum	Chicago, IL	March 2027
TN MPI + LT Client Event	Nashville, TN	March 2027
SISO CEO Symposium	Charleston, SC	March 2027
ConferenceDirect APM	Las Vegas, NV	March 2027
CMCA	Destin, FL	March 2027
Retreat Resources TX Roadshow	Ft. Worth-Dallas-Houston	March 2027
Pharma Forum	National Harbor, MD	March 2027
Sports Travel Road Trip	Colorado Springs, CO	March 2027
Sales Call	Washington, DC	March 2027
CVENT Connect 2027	Denver, CO	April 2027
Sports ETA Symposium	Salt Lake City, UT	April 2027
Connect Spring Marketplace	Las Vegas, NV	April 2027
DC Willard Derby Tea and Spring Sales Mission	Washington, DC	April 2027
ATL Derby Days	Atlanta, GA	April 2027
Destination Celebrations KC	Kansas City, MO	April 2027

Destination Minneapolis	Minneapolis, MN	April 2027
Maritz Roadshow	Cleveland, OH	April 2027
Destinations International Sales & Services Summit	Washington, DC	April 2027
Association Headquarters AH Forum	Philadelphia, PA	April 2027
Southeast Sales Calls	TBD	April 2027
IAEE Women's Leadership Forum	National Harbor, MD	May 2027
Aces Conference	Jacksonville, FL	May 2027
Northstar Incentive Live	TBD	May 2027
Maritz Presentation	St. Louis, MO	May 2027
Maritz Elevate	TBD	May 2027
PCMA Visionary Awards	Washington, DC	May 2027
Minneapolis Sales Call	Minneapolis, MN	May 2027
Exhibition & Convention Executives Forum (ECEP)	Washington, DC	June 2027
Helmsbriscoe ABC	Orlando, FL	June 2027
FICP Education	Arizona	June 2027
MPI WEC	Las Vegas, NV	June 2027
PCMA Business Event Summit (edUcon)	TBD	June 2027
IAEE Leadership Institute	Baltimore, MA	June 2027
Association Forum Honor's Gala	Chicago, IL	June 2027

MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS PRE-PROMOTES

Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Expo	Nashville, TN	March 2027
Hospice & Palliative Medicine	Pittsburgh, PA	March 2027
Lumbermens Merchandising Corporation	Tampa, FL	March 2027
MetalCon International	Orlando, FL	October 2026
SHAPE America	Charlotte, NC	April 2027
Solheim Cup	Bernardus, NL	September 2026

LEISURE MARKET

Domestic Travel Trade

Association of Black Travel Professionals	Charlotte, NC	August 2026
Great Day Tours Marketplace	Independence, OH	October 2026
Ontario Motorcoach Assn. (OMCA)	Markham, ON	November 2026
National Tour Association Travel Exchange (NTA)	Tulsa, OK	November 2026
American Bus Association Annual Marketplace (ABA)	Calgary, CA	February 2027
African American Travel Conference	Williamsburg, VA	April 2027
Brand USA Connect Eastern Canada Show	Toronto, CA	October 2026
Domestic Travel Trade Sales Mission	Philadelphia, PA	September 2026

International

Solheim Cup	Amsterdam, NL	September 2026
London Cocktail Week	London, England	March 2027
Brand USA Travel Week	Amsterdam, NL	September 2026
Travel South International Showcase	Nashville, TN	November 2026
Travel South International Sales Mission	TBD	March 2027
New York Travel Advisor/RTO Sales Blitz	Manhattan, NY	April 2027

Travel South International Global Media Marketplace	Bentonville, AR	April 2027
IPW	New Orleans, LA	May 2027
Epsom Derby – UK Sales Mission	London, England	June 2027

Niche/Affinity

513 Festival/Cincinnati Music Festival	Cincinnati, OH	July 2026
Fine Wine Event	Chicago, IL	August 2026
Detroit Bourbon & Blues Festival	Detroit, MI	August 2026
Beer, Bourbon, & BBQ Festival	Atlanta, GA	February 2027
Alpha South Regional Convention	TBD	March 2027
NOLA Bourbon Festival	New Orleans, LA	March 2027
Ebony Sensory Soiree	Chicago	Spring 2027
Cincinnati Pride Festival	Cincinnati, OH	June 2027
St. Louis Pride Festival	St. Louis, MO	June 2027

Consumer

Kentucky State Fair	Louisville, KY	August 2026
AmericanaFest	Nashville, TN	September 2026
Winter Warm-Up	Manhattan, NY	December 2026
New York Travel & Adventure Show	Manhattan, NY	January 2027
New York Fashion Week	Manhattan, NY	February 2027
New York City Whiskey & Spirits Fest	Manhattan, NY	February 2027
Chicago Travel and Advertising Show	Chicago, IL	February 2027
Tribeca Film Festival	Manhattan, NY	June 2027
Leisure Market Blitz	Indianapolis, IN	October 2026
		May 2027
Black Tie Affair Fine Wine Event	Manhattan, NY	February 2027
High Notes Fine Wine Event	Washington, DC	April 2027
Derby/Summer Event	Manhattan, NY	May/June 2027

