# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Message from the President &amp; CEO</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Tucson ROI</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Tucson Funding Overview</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Tourism Overview</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Tourism Overview</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Tucson Tourism Overview</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Tucson 3-Year Strategic Plan</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Tucson 10-Year Tourism Master Plan</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Délice Gathering 2019</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR &amp; Communications</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales &amp; Services</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucson Sports</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico Marketing</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Tucson</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership &amp; Visitor Services</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Service &amp; Stakeholder Participation</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Directory</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Customers & Stakeholders,

This has been an outstanding year for Visit Tucson. Our programs generated $238 million in direct spending and impacts, roughly 9% of visitors’ $2.47 billion spending in Pima County in 2018. The $238 million reflects a remarkable $24-to-$1 return on investment based on Visit Tucson’s $9.75 million budget in 2018-19.

Metro Tucson’s lodging revenue per available room (RevPAR) grew 6.2% during our 2018-19 fiscal year (July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019), ranking us fourth in our 14-city competitive set.* This is encouraging considering the lodging plateau we are seeing in many western/southwestern cities. It is our hope that this is a temporary slowing after several years of strong growth in lodging occupancy, rates and RevPAR. Many U.S. economic indicators remain strong, but our nation continues to lose market share in international travel.

While Visit Tucson will always prioritize selling, marketing and promoting our region, we are delving into destination management through the creation of a metro Tucson tourism master plan. This 10-year initiative allows us to put forth our vision about what products, services and experiences are needed to enhance the region’s quality of life, while building a destination that will attract more visitors and their dollars, along with meetings, sports events and film activity. We are helping create a better place to live, work, play—and visit. The plan’s six pillars are outlined on page 15.

Part of creating a better Tucson is through community engagement. I am proud to report that Visit Tucson’s staff collaborated with 61 boards, committees and civic and professional organizations in the past fiscal year. A list is on page 39.

Visit Tucson is also promoting experiences within the Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area, designated as such by Congress in March 2019. This 3,300-square-mile corridor in southern Arizona encompasses several communities in Pima and Santa Cruz counties with abundant heritage and nature attractions.

These and other accomplishments from the past year, along with our current priorities, are highlighted in this Visit Tucson 2018-19 Annual Report & 2019-20 Marketing Plan. We are pleased to share these results and thank each of you who contributed your time and resources to benefit travel and tourism in metro Tucson. We look forward to continuing our program of work as part of the regional hub for tourism and visitor information in our new location in the Historic Pima County Courthouse building.

"This has been an outstanding year for Visit Tucson. Our programs generated $238 million in direct spending and impacts, roughly 9% of visitors’ $2.47 billion spending in Pima County in 2018."

Best Regards,

Brent DeRaad
President & CEO
### 2019–20 Executive Committee

**Chair**  
Nancy Kluge, President & CEO  
Reid Park Zoological Society

**Vice Chair**  
John Denker, Associate Vice President,  
Marketing & Brand Management  
University of Arizona

**Secretary**  
Amber Harkin, Regional Director, Operations  
Lodging Dynamics Hospitality Group

**Treasurer**  
Glenn Grabski, General Manager  
Tucson Convention Center

**Member at Large**  
Thomas “TJ” Morgan, President & CEO  
Gray Line Tours Tucson

**Member at Large**  
Laura Shaw, Senior Vice President  
Sun Corridor Inc.

**Immediate Past Chair**  
Russell Bond, General Manager  
JW Marriott Tucson Starr Pass Resort

### 2019–20 Board Members

**General Business**  
Carol Blomstrand, CEO  
Trumpet Social Media

Dan Cavanagh, Consultant  
Lloyd Construction

Evan Feldhausen, Tax Shareholder  
BeachFleischman

Bob Hoffman, President  
Tucson Roadrunners

Steve Rosenberg, Owner & Publisher  
BizTucson Magazine

**Hospitality/Visitor Services**  
Ghee Alexander, Sr. VP of Operations  
Prism Hotels & Resorts

Nick Letson, Associate Director  
Sonoran Glass School

Neil Shah, Owner & General Manager  
Best Western Plus Royal Sun

Chris Squires, Managing Partner  
Ten55 Brewing & Sausage House

**Government**  
Sharon Bronson, Member  
Pima County Board of Supervisors, District 3

Josh Nicolson, Member  
Oro Valley Town Council

Shirley Scott, Member  
Tucson City Council, Ward 4

**Members at Large**  
David Hatfield, Senior Director Air Service Development and Marketing  
Tucson Airport Authority

Amber Smith, President & CEO  
Tucson Metro Chamber

Andrew Stegen, General Manager  
Westward Look Wyndham Grand Resort

Laura True, Owner  
White Stallion Ranch

Bryan Tubaugh, Executive Vice President  
Focus Hospitality
**Visit Tucson’s Return on Investment (ROI)**

$24:1

Visit Tucson generates $24 for the metro Tucson region for every $1 invested in the organization.

- $98,680,000 Leisure Visitor Inquiry Impact
- $70,334,139 Meetings Economic Impact
- $24,156,536 Sports Economic Impact
- *$2,364,091 Mexico Economic Impact
- $32,934,527 Public Relations Earned Media
- $9,661,822 Film Direct Spending

**Visit Tucson’s Economic Impact**

*INCREASED 1.1% IN 2018-19*

= $238,131,115

÷ $9,750,000

(2018-19 Budget)

= $24.4

**$238,131,115** 2018-19 TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

*Counts only room nights booked by Vamos a Tucson*
Visit Tucson Funding Overview

Visit Tucson is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization that provides destination marketing services for Pima County, City of Tucson and the Town of Oro Valley. Visit Tucson also partners with the Tohono O’odham Gaming Enterprise and Casino Del Sol. Combined, these entities are expected to invest $9.7 million in Visit Tucson in 2019-20, approximately 96% of the organization’s revenue.

Pima County, Tucson and Oro Valley invest only bed-tax revenue in Visit Tucson. Bed (transient occupancy) tax is paid by people who stay for 30 days or less in hotels, resorts, bed and breakfasts and short-term lodging facilities. Visit Tucson does not receive general fund revenue from these government entities.

We will have the advantage of a full year of collections from short-term vacation rentals in 2019-20. Arizona short-term vacation rentals began remitting county and municipal lodging taxes in January 2019.

Private-sector revenue makes up the remaining $347,850 in Visit Tucson’s 2019-20 fiscal year budget. Visit Tucson’s nearly 500 partner businesses pay annual membership dues, and many invest in advertising on our website, in our publications and at the visitor center.

Partners also invest in our cooperative advertising programs and travel with us on sales missions and to industry tradeshows. We also derive revenue from booking metro Tucson hotel room nights for customers at our visitor centers in Hermosillo and Ciudad Obregón, Sonora.

**Funding Sources**

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<td>$5,850,000</td>
<td>City of Tucson</td>
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<td>$3,500,000</td>
<td>Pima County</td>
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<tr>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td>Town of Oro Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>Casino Del Sol</td>
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<tr>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>Desert Diamond Casino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$347,850</td>
<td>Private</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>$10,172,850</strong></td>
<td><strong>Budgeted 2019-20 Revenue</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
U.S. Tourism Overview

Hot Markets Start to Cool Down

The U.S. hotel industry’s unprecedented expansion over the last decade is expected to continue, but at a slower pace. According to a June 2019 STR and Tourism Economics’ forecast, the U.S. hotel industry is projected to see overall performance growth of 2% for 2019 and 1.9% for 2020. For 2019 as a whole, the U.S. hotel industry is projected to report a 0.1% increase in occupancy to 66.2%, a 1.9% rise in average daily rate (ADR) to $132.32 and a 2% lift in revenue per available room (RevPAR) to $87.65.

A July 2019 U.S. Travel Association travel forecast predicts continued growth over the next several years, though the pace of growth for both domestic leisure and business travel is expected to decelerate in line with the overall U.S. economy. “While there continues to be record numbers of travelers on the road and in the air, travelers and businesses appear to be scaling back, taking more road trips and being more cautious when booking group business travel,” the report said.

The outlook for international inbound travel remains challenging, according to the U.S. Travel Association. Although more people are traveling globally, fewer are coming to America. Our nation’s share of the global travel market dropped from 13.7 percent in 2015 to 11.7 percent in 2018. This decline is expected to continue until at least 2022 as trade tensions and a strong dollar chill foreign tourism.

A Focus on Meeting Experiences

Creating unique attendee experiences is the largest single, overarching trend noted in the spring 2019 Meetings Outlook survey. Comments from 78% of the meeting planner respondents say this trend is increasing. Further, most (66%) of the respondents said this specialized need affects their venue-selection decisions.

Meeting planners are also noticing an increased emphasis on health and well-being. As a result, hotels are making it easier for guests to stay healthy on the road, according to a Smart Meetings article on top 10 hospitality industry trends (August 2018). The article said that tourism is a $563 billion industry and increasingly travelers are expecting innovative wellness options, from healthy food choices to on-site fitness or physical activities and nature experiences.
Solo Leisure Travel Growing

More and more people are planning solo trips aided by technological advances that have made this option more accessible and secure. Solo travel continues to be a significant travel trend among all demographic sectors, but especially among women of all ages. An estimated 32 million American women travel alone every year, according to the Travel Industry Association. As more women travel independently, hotels (guest ranches and destination spas appear to be especially popular) are finding new, innovative ways to appeal to their interests.

Even so, a July 2018 survey commissioned by Intrepid Travel of 2,000 American travelers found that 73 percent of respondents worry about safety while traveling completely alone, 53 percent worry about getting lost and 39 percent are concerned about the stress of planning a trip. This is an opportunity for tour companies and travel experts to reach this traveler segment by offering customized solo-friendly and self-guided group tours.

Source: “Going It Alone, Solo Travel On The Rise,” Adventure Travel Trade Association

“The U.S. hotel industry’s unprecedented expansion over the last decade is expected to continue, but at a slower pace.”
Arizona Tourism Overview

A Record-Breaking Year

Arizona’s tourism industry had a big year in 2018. The state hosted a record number of overnight visitors (45.4 million) whose spending reached a record amount ($24.4 billion). That visitor spending is equal to $67 million per day and 8% more than the previous record for Arizona, set in 2017. As a result, state tax revenues generated by visitor spending reached the $1 billion mark for the first time ever. (Based on research by Dean Runyan Associates, Longwoods International and Tourism Economics.)

Equally significant, the Arizona Office of Tourism’s budget was increased in the 2019 legislative session. This effort was steered by leaders of destination marketing organizations statewide and the Arizona Lodging & Tourism Association (AzLTA), chaired this year by Visit Tucson’s president and CEO Brent DeRaad. While tourism leaders sought a $3.55 million increase to AOT’s $7.1 million baseline allocation and thought up until the waning moments of the session that an additional $2 million would be secured, the final appropriation was $8.2 million, or a $1.1 million increase in 2019-20. This is the first increase to AOT’s baseline appropriation in more than a decade. Combined with its other funding sources, AOT’s budget grew from $14.6 million to $15.7 million in 2019-20.

Arizona-Europe Travel Simplified

Getting to Arizona from Europe became easier in 2019 when two airlines (American Airlines and Condor Airlines) increased their offerings to benefit both business and leisure travelers.

American Airlines launched a daily nonstop flight that runs year-round between Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and London Heathrow Airport. American’s service from London was introduced on a seasonal basis, from March through October 2019, and later expanded. With this service, American joined British Airways as the only airlines offering nonstop service between Phoenix and London from Sky Harbor.

Condor Airlines, a German leisure airline based in Frankfurt, will extend its seasonal nonstop Phoenix-Frankfurt flight in 2020. Currently, the airline’s service from Frankfurt runs May through October, three days a week. Condor will expand this service, adding two days a week for the month of April, then continue its three day a week service from May to October. Condor Airlines began nonstop seasonal service between Sky Harbor and Frankfurt in May 2018.

Source: STR, December 2015-18
"Arizona had a big year in 2018. The state hosted a record number of overnight visitors (45.4 million) whose spending reached a record amount ($24.4 billion)."
Metro Tucson Tourism Overview

Hotels Lead Competition in February

Metro Tucson hotels continued to rebound in 2018-19 as occupancy, average daily rate (ADR) and revenue per available room (RevPAR) maintained year-over-year growth, according to STR data for December 2015-18. The 6.2% increase in RevPAR is balanced with 3.1% occupancy and 3% ADR, which should allow for continued growth in this sector.

In January, our hotel occupancy fell year-over-year, as the dates of the Tucson Gem, Mineral & Fossil Showcase moved back a week into February this year. Yet that led to a strong February when metro Tucson hotel-and-resort occupancy was 85.4%, which led our 14-city set of comparable large cities in the western U.S. That strength was maintained in March, when hotel occupancy was at 83.6%, STR research shows.

Tucson is predicted to follow the state and the nation as growth begins to slow, but it is unlikely to be as fast or as soon. Growth is expected to level off slightly in the coming year.

TUS Serves Nearly 4 Million Passengers


Sun Link Streetcar Marks Five Years

Downtown Tucson continued its renaissance that coincided with the arrival of Sun Link Streetcar, which opened July 25, 2014. The streetcar has provided approximately 4.77 million rides to passengers and spurred over $1 billion in private and public investment along the streetcar route. This investment has funded housing, retail and corporate business expansions along the streetcar corridor, including 90 new restaurants, bars and cafes, and retail businesses over the last three years according to the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). (Source: Sun Link Streetcar report, July 27)
Downtown Hotel Development Booming

Hotel development downtown started taking off with the 2017 opening of the 136-room Marriott-run AC Hotel. We are now seeing a long-awaited convention center hotel and more openings of boutique hotels. Caliber Hospitality is developing a six-story, 170-room DoubleTree by Hilton adjacent to the Tucson Convention Center. The new hotel will have meeting space, a pool, two bars and a restaurant and is expected to open by the end of 2020.

The Graduate Hotel at Main Gate has broken ground, while downtown is getting its first dual-brand hotel, the Hilton Hotel at Cathedral Square, which will house a 75-room Hampton Inn and a 123-room extended-stay Home2. Downtown is also seeing several hip independent hotels coming online.

In addition to the Downtown Clifton and its expansion to 30 rooms that should be completed by year’s end, the 93-room Hotel McCoy opened last year. The 112-room The Tuxon, a former Motel 6, is a boutique hotel expected to open by January 2020.

(Source: Trend Report, July 2019)

Pima County 2018 Travel Impacts

- Direct Travel Spending = $2.467 billion (+4.8%)
- Travel Industry Earnings = $752 million (+1.3%)
- Travel-Related Jobs = 24,670 (-1.2%)
- Local Tax Receipts = $76.6 million (+3.5%)
- State Tax Receipts = $132.2 million (+4.1%)

Source: “Tracking Domestic Visitor Volumes for Arizona: 2017” Tourism Economics

Because of visitor spending, each Pima County household had its tax burden reduced by $510 (+2%) in 2018


6.8 M Total 2018 domestic overnight visitors to Tucson and Southern Arizona region (+4.6%)
YEAR TWO SUMMARY

5 Goals
Developed by Visit Tucson board in February 2017

25 Objectives
Developed by Visit Tucson board in February 2017

41 Strategies
Developed by Visit Tucson staff in May 2018

87 Tactics
Developed by Visit Tucson staff in May 2018

TACTICS
Progress as of July 2019

55 Accomplished (63%)
9 Not accomplished (10%)
23 Carried over to 2019-20 (26%)

87 Total

STRATEGIC GOALS

Five goals were developed around helping make the vision a reality.

Goal 1
Promote Tucson’s UNESCO City of Gastronomy designation and build on Visit Tucson’s “Free Yourself” brand.

Goal 2
Use innovative and aggressive marketing strategies to generate increased leisure and meetings travel.

Goal 3
Engage the community through development of a tourism master plan.

Goal 4
Promote and grow the region’s visitor-worthy events and establish a marquee event to attract travelers.

Goal 5
Enlarge Visit Tucson’s budget with a focus on sustainable funding sources.

VISION
Welcoming the world, while making Tucson a better place to visit, live, work and play.
We supported existing events that sought to grow their scope and/or visitor attendance, such as Agave Heritage Festival; we sponsored new events with potential to attract visitors, such as Sonoran Restaurant Week. We postponed the establishment of an events committee until recommendations from the Metro Tucson Tourism Master Plan could be considered and incorporated. We also continued to expand our promotion of arts and cultural amenities, and we have taken a lead role in organizational development and promotion of the newly designated Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area. While we supported new air service, we did not secure consistent funding to attract new flights.

Visit Tucson’s budget grew from $9.2 million in 2017-18 to $9.7 million in 2018-19. The contracts with key funders, City of Tucson, Pima County and Oro Valley are finalized, including significant increases from the City of Tucson and Pima County. Efforts to establish a voluntary tourism district were halted, but efforts are underway to draft enabling legislation that would allow compulsory tourism improvement districts to be created by jurisdictions throughout Arizona. We moved our office into the Historic Pima County Courthouse and updated our organization’s bylaws.

Goal 1. Promote Tucson’s UNESCO City of Gastronomy designation and build on Visit Tucson’s “Free Yourself” brand.

Visitors spending on food and beverage increased by $84 million from 2016 ($610 million) to 2018 ($694 million)*. Visit Tucson doubled the number of conversions that occurred through our website in 2018-19 over 2017-18 (conversions included hotel bookings, newsletter signups, travel guide requests, video clicks and social media engagements). Our social media engagements grew by more than 100% and our PR efforts generated 17% more articles. We continued robust marketing efforts in Mexico; however, total room nights booked through VamosaTucson.com declined and we did not establish nonstop air service.

*Dean Runyan Associates, July 2019

28 tactics
17 accomplished, 3 not accomplished, 8 carried over

Goal 2. Use innovative and aggressive marketing strategies to generate increased leisure and meetings travel.

Groups and meetings business expanded despite having fewer Jehovah’s Witnesses conventions in June 2019 vs. 2018. Sports tourism grew due in part to the 2019 USA Rugby Collegiate Sevens Championships hosted at Kino Sports Complex. Film Tucson surpassed the amount of economic impact it generated in the previous year. Leisure tourism continued to be strong, with international VISA spending increasing for Canada and Germany while decreasing for the U.K. and China.

21 tactics
17 accomplished, 4 carried over

Goal 3. Engage the community through development of a tourism master plan.

The Metro Tucson Tourism Master Plan was a key priority for 2018-19, with the draft plan available for review in June and the final plan completed in August 2019. To help us promote the value of tourism, we conducted an economic impact study of the Tucson Gem, Mineral & Fossil Showcase and invested in visitor demographic and spending data. We established a new Certified Tourism Ambassador program. The opening of a new visitor center at the Historic Pima County Courthouse was pushed back to 2020.

19 tactics
11 accomplished, 1 not accomplished, 7 carried over

Goal 4. Promote and grow the region’s visitor-worthy events and establish a marquee event to attract travelers.

We supported existing events that sought to grow their scope and/or visitor attendance, such as Agave Heritage Festival; we sponsored new events with potential to attract visitors, such as Sonoran Restaurant Week. We postponed the establishment of an events committee until recommendations from the Metro Tucson Tourism Master Plan could be considered and incorporated. We also continued to expand our promotion of arts and cultural amenities, and we have taken a lead role in organizational development and promotion of the newly designated Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area. While we supported new air service, we did not secure consistent funding to attract new flights.

9 tactics
4 accomplished, 2 not accomplished, 3 carried over

Goal 5. Enlarge Visit Tucson’s budget with a focus on sustainable funding sources.

Visit Tucson’s budget grew from $9.2 million in 2017-18 to $9.7 million in 2018-19. The contracts with key funders, City of Tucson, Pima County and Oro Valley are finalized, including significant increases from the City of Tucson and Pima County. Efforts to establish a voluntary tourism district were halted, but efforts are underway to draft enabling legislation that would allow compulsory tourism improvement districts to be created by jurisdictions throughout Arizona. We moved our office into the Historic Pima County Courthouse and updated our organization’s bylaws.

10 tactics
6 accomplished, 3 not accomplished, 1 carried over
METRO TUCSON 10-YEAR TOURISM MASTER PLAN

A Roadmap for the Future of Tourism

Visit Tucson hired place strategy experts Resonance Consultancy in August 2018 to assist us in the development of a 10-year Metro Tucson Tourism Master Plan that will help identify ways to grow the number of overnight visitors, length of stays and expenditures.

The year-long process involved a series of stakeholder workshops and interviews with nearly 100 individuals who shared their expertise and unique perspectives. Additional research included a festival-and-events analysis, visitor and resident surveys and a destination assessment looking into how Tucson competes with 14 destinations in our competitive set.

The plan identifies the three visitor audiences we expect to see more of over the next 10 years and outlines recommendations in six strategic focus areas to reach those visitor segments: Seekers and explorers, Spanish-speaking visitors and meetings delegates.

Findings from the research and visioning phases guided the development of the tourism master plan, which goes far beyond the traditional travel industry and also identifies issues and opportunities to improve quality of life for residents and to stimulate economic prosperity.

Six Pillars of Focus

Some of the recommendations in the plan can be taken on by Visit Tucson while others will be best addressed by our partners, including local government, economic development organizations, educational institutions and others.

The recommendations are organized in no particular order into six pillars of focus, with a variety of strategies that align with each.

For more information about each of the following recommendations, please download the full plan at: VisitTucson.org/tourism-master-plan

1. WELL-BEING

Tucson has a strength of identity associated with well-being resulting from our area’s history, natural environment and experiences. The concept of well-being came up consistently in all stakeholder sessions, but in many different forms, including:

- Capital of Well-Being
- Health Well-Being - Medical tourism
- Intellectual Well-Being - Continuing education and life-long learning
- Physical Well-Being - Biking tourism
- Physical Well-Being - Sports tourism
- Spiritual Well-Being - Outdoor experiences
2. PLACEMAKING

How do we enhance places, large and small, that reveal metro Tucson as a distinct and authentic place for residents and visitors alike? Three categories were identified, which included both new and underutilized spaces with potential for transformation:

- Downtown Tucson
- Gathering place
- Community villages, main streets & downtowns

3. CONNECTIVITY

Moving residents and visitors into, out of, and around metro Tucson conveniently and efficiently is a critical component of the visitor experience as well as the quality of life for residents.

Transportation plans, airline services and alternative routes that integrate bicycling and walking are top areas of focus. By incorporating the visitor experience into transportation plans and making sure the travel industry has a seat at the table, we can help ensure the experience of getting here and there is as pleasant as the experience in Tucson itself.

- Connectivity, accessibility & proximity
- Airlift development
- The Loop

4. CULTURE

Our region is blessed with a rich historic legacy that creates a sense of place for residents and attracts visitors from around the world. We can celebrate and share our cultural heritage through programs and activities that grow, enhance and promote the varied multicultural pursuits here.

- City of Gastronomy activation
- Events & festivals
- Native American heritage
- Spanish-speaking visitor experience
5. DEVELOPMENT / INVESTMENT

Both the research and the stakeholder workshops identified a variety of opportunities to deliver a quality experience for visitors via major infrastructure investments and upgrades. The tourism master plan details numerous ways we can work together to support infrastructure investments and workforce development:

- Full-service, downtown & headquarter hotel(s)
- Tucson Convention Center
- Technology & tourism
- Experience Hothouse
- Economic & workforce development
- Visit Tucson efforts

6. ADVOCACY

As part of efforts to convey tourism’s economic value, Visit Tucson is taking on broader leadership roles in local affairs, including community development. Research for this master plan underscored not only metro Tucson’s competitive advantage in nature and outdoor activities, but also the importance of basic infrastructure. This focus area highlights the need to advocate for infrastructure and road improvements, to develop a sustainable tourism plan and to better connect regional communities to understand tourism’s importance, and to engage with visitors.

- Meetings and conventions business & economic development
- Neighborhood / community development
- Basic infrastructure
- Sustainable tourism

Next Steps

Visit Tucson will form a tourism master plan implementation committee to guide development and enactment of specific tactics and to track progress. Additionally, a new three-year strategic plan will be developed and administered in 2020-23 to include application of the Metro Tucson Tourism Master Plan.
A Mosaic of Culture, History and Nature in Southern Arizona is Recognized

Earlier this year, Congress designated the Santa Cruz Valley in Southern Arizona as a National Heritage Area (NHA). National Heritage Areas are non-regulatory designations made by Congress to honor and celebrate the region’s contribution to America’s history, while also stimulating heritage-based economic development and geotourism in the region.

The 3,300-square-mile Santa Cruz Valley NHA spans the communities of Elgin, Green Valley, Marana, Nogales, Oro Valley, Patagonia, Sahuarita, San Xavier, Sonoita, Tubac and Tucson in Pima and Santa Cruz counties. It is a natural and cultural landscape that has been shaped by many generations of people from diverse cultural origins.

Landmarks, preserves, public lands

The region encompasses a mosaic of cultures and history due to its extensive human presence, dating back more than 12,000 years. Home to Arizona’s earliest civilizations, it is the longest continually cultivated area in the United States, with an agricultural record of more than 4,000 years that includes a 300-year-old tradition of vineyards, orchards and livestock farming. Also within the region are six National Historic Landmarks, a 100-mile segment of a National Historic Trail, and a large number of historic districts and buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places, among other historic resources.

Nature tourism and outdoor recreation resources here include hundreds of miles of backcountry trails, many excellent bird-watching locations, numerous sites for outdoor recreation such as bicycling, hiking, camping and stargazing in places like Coronado National Forest, Saguaro National Park, Tumacácori National Historical Park, four state parks and other parks, preserves and public lands.
TUCSON JOINS DÉLICE NETWORK

Tucson was designated as the first UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in the United States in December 2015. Visit Tucson began promoting this designation, gaining publicity for our city’s growing independent restaurant scene and expanding base of local farmers and chefs who are cultivating and cooking with indigenous ingredients and heritage foods. Three years after receiving the recognition, Tucson attracted the attention of another culinary-focused organization, Délite Network.

While the City of Gastronomy designation aims to strengthen creative partnerships between cities to drive sustainable urban development worldwide, the Délite Network focuses primarily on sharing food and gastronomy knowledge for economic development locally.

Délite is an international network of cities whose culinary heritage and gastronomic offerings define them as top food destinations. Created in 2007 by the City of Lyon in France, Délite is composed of 30 cities from four continents (as of July 2019) and offers a platform to exchange and meet with chefs and gastronomy professionals from around the world.

Délite invited Visit Tucson to apply for membership on behalf of the City of Tucson, and in October 2018 Tucson was accepted as the 26th member and second American city (after Chicago). New member Tucson was invited to host the 2019 Délite Gathering, an annual meeting of member cities, on May 1-3.

For three days, 35 participants from 15 member cities (including Chicago, Helsinki, Kobe and Lisbon, among others) gathered to learn about the Tucson approach to food and to share best practices. The theme of the meeting was “superstar” foods, the “must-tastes” that reflect a culture or define a sense of place. Participants discovered how Tucson approaches its superstar agave plant at public and private events, including a full-day discussion with workshops.
Superstar Agave

The meeting coincided with Tucson’s Agave Heritage Festival, which celebrates the regional importance of the ancient agave plant used to make tequila, mezcal and other liquors, among other purposes. For the first time in the Délice Network, cocktails were featured along with food, owing to the trending popularity of cocktail culture. Four renowned mixologists from Délice cities and four Tucson peers performed together at two festival events. Attendees learned how Tucson has embraced its superstar food by organizing a dedicated festival around the versatile agave, opening up a series of new marketing opportunities.

Attendees also joined in tours of the San Xavier Cooperative Farm to learn about healthy farming practices and growing traditional crops to support economic development within a Native American community. They toured Mission Garden to learn about preservation of agricultural heritage and cultivation of heirloom fruit orchards and vegetable gardens and the historic Presidio District for gastronomic talks and tastings. The attendees heard from experts at the University of Arizona’s Center for Regional Food Studies and the Desert Laboratory on Tumamoc Hill as well as organizers of local food events such as Tucson Meet Yourself. The guests tasted foods featured on the tours during meals prepared by local chefs and bartenders.

A Taste Of Tucson

From gastronomy lessons to agave tastings, this Délice Gathering served up an informative taste of Tucson and spotlighted local efforts to increase economic development through culinary tourism. Next, Visit Tucson will participate in the Délice Gathering in Stavanger, Norway in September 2019 and send a local chef who will create a Sonoran-style dish at a chef challenge.

The 2019 Délice Gathering in Tucson was organized and hosted by Visit Tucson with support from Pima County, City of Tucson, Arizona-Mexico Commission, University of Arizona College of Social and Behavioral Sciences-Mexico Initiatives, Arizona Lodging & Tourism Association, Rio Nuevo, UNESCO City of Gastronomy, Agave Heritage Festival, Casino Del Sol and Tucson Electric Power.

A Place at the Global Table

A look at how the first months of Délice Network membership have benefited Tucson from Felipe Garcia, Visit Tucson’s Executive Vice President and our representative to the Délice Network.

How has membership positioned Tucson internationally?

Membership has helped validate Tucson as a great destination for gastronomy. The fact that key stakeholders from Barcelona, Brussels, Cali, Gaziantep, Lyon, Madrid and many others came to Tucson and engaged in a positive conversation supports Tucson’s position in this area. It feels great to be invited to the table with some amazing cities of gastronomy from around the world.

How has Délice participation benefited Tucson?

It is a plus for Tucson that we now have access to such outstanding information and best practices. We already have a list of projects that other cities have implemented that we want to study. We were very encouraged by the dialogue and interaction between the members of the network. Even though this was our first official meeting, we were treated as an equal partner to those with more seniority.
VISIT TUCSON’S DEPARTMENTS

MARKETING
PR & COMMUNICATIONS
SALES & SERVICES
TUCSON SPORTS
MEXICO MARKETING
TOURISM
FILM TUCSON
PARTNERSHIP & VISITOR SERVICES
The primary goal of Visit Tucson’s marketing department is to engage leisure, business and international travelers with the “Free Yourself” brand and to inspire them to experience everything metro Tucson and Southern Arizona have to offer. Through research and analysis, potential visitors from key markets are identified and targeted with relevant content and branded advertising deployed seasonally through a variety of media channels. Marketing also produces advertising and marketing communications for the agency and for the destination.

Despite exceptional growth in recent years, Visit Tucson’s media budget is still relatively small when compared to many destinations in our competitive set. Keeping in mind this competition and the need to adjust with changing consumer habits, a paid media strategy that focuses primarily on digital platforms has been adopted to more accurately target specific audiences and better evaluate campaign return on investment (ROI).

“Through increased digital marketing and data-driven targeting, Visit Tucson saw a 6% increase in time-on-page and a 2% decrease in bounce rate for VisitTucson.org.”

Highlights 2018-19

- Released a new Tucson hero video which received over 800,000 views. Partnering with Matador Network, one of the world’s top travel sites, Visit Tucson produced and released a new three-minute, attention-grabbing video showcasing some of the top things to do and places to go in Tucson and Southern Arizona. By the end of the 2018-19 fiscal year, the video had received over 800,000 views across Visit Tucson and Matador Network channels. The video included a variety of attractions, activities and restaurants combined with a soundtrack provided by Tucson local musicians.

- Increased website engagement by adjusting our media strategy. Through increased digital marketing and data-driven targeting, Visit Tucson saw a 6% increase in time-on-page and a 2% decrease in bounce rate for VisitTucson.org. We also saw a 5% increase in flight bookings made by website visitors as tracked by our data partner, ADARA Analytics.

- Invested in new first-party research from Longwoods International. Visit Tucson entered into an agreement with Longwoods International to receive survey data from its longstanding Travel USA study. This behavioral and demographic data will be used to define new marketing tactics and targeting by giving us better insight into important data points relating to trip planning, booking, length of stay, expenditures, accommodations, activities and more.
Visit Tucson recently partnered with the industry-leading 360° experience company, Threshold 360, to capture immersive visual content from hundreds of locations around Tucson and Southern Arizona. This hybrid of 360° video and photo technology will allow us to embed amazing 360° experiences live across our website including on partner listing pages.

In addition to our ability to embed these 360° videos on our website, we will also be able to use them to create custom maps that can be provided to meeting planners, event organizers, film production crews, journalists and other customers. This added layer of visual storytelling will allow us to provide an enhanced view of our destination’s assets in one easy-to-use interface.

And this technology means much more than simply enhancing the visual experience. According to Google, adding interior 360° experiences to a search result doubles the chances someone will visit a location in person.

Priorities 2019–20

• Place media and content on top travel platforms with an emphasis on new and emerging platforms that currently lack metro Tucson content.
• Develop a more robust media plan geared toward marketing to Canadian consumers.
• Begin the process of updating our branding by compiling research and reviewing competitive destinations before ultimately sending out a branding request for proposals (RFP).
• Align marketing messaging and tactics with the new 10-year Metro Tucson Tourism Master Plan.

Taking a 360° Approach

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PR & COMMUNICATIONS

The department of public relations and communications generates coverage of metro Tucson and Southern Arizona in national and international publications. The PR team pitches story ideas to journalists and influencers, conducts media missions in key cities, and hosts site visits and familiarization tours (FAMs) of our area. PR & Communications manages production of the Tucson Official Travel Guide and the Visit Tucson e-newsletter and other content for leisure travelers, and also handles social media marketing and local media relations.

“Foodies, cyclists and the aesthetically inclined will find much to like in this desert city.” The New York Times, September 2018

Highlights 2018-19

• Generated 189 articles, an increase of 17% over the previous year. One of this year’s highlights was the article entitled “36 Hours in Tucson” which ran in The New York Times in September 2018. Additionally, articles featuring Tucson ran in several of the largest circulation newspapers in the country including USA Today, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune and Denver Post.

• Hosted 95 travel writers on press visits and FAM trips, an increase of 16% over the previous year. In September 2018, the Association of Food Journalists held their annual conference in Phoenix. As conference sponsors, Visit Tucson was able to offer the only official familiarization tour associated with the conference, which brought 20 food influencers from across the country to Tucson. In April 2019, the Western Chapter of the Society of American Travel Writers held their annual meeting at White Stallion Ranch. With two pre-tours and one post-tour offered, 19 travel writers extended their stays in Tucson and Southern Arizona.

• Expanded and accelerated distribution of the 2019 Tucson Official Travel Guide. This past year, Visit Tucson expanded distribution of the Tucson Official Travel Guide through social media efforts, e-newsletter pushes and a website redesign that made it easier than ever for interested consumers to request a guide. New for 2019, we began distributing the guide at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. These additional efforts have accelerated distribution such that we anticipate distributing all the 2019 guides before the end of the year. Thus, the 2020 guide will be available in November 2019.
Priorities 2019–20

- **Increase earned media coverage** by continuing to push Tucson’s UNESCO City of Gastronomy designation, while expanding our message to include Tucson’s competitive amenities for mountain biking and road biking.

- **Update Visit Tucson’s content marketing plan** to focus on the strategic creation, distribution and tracking of compelling content across all owned and paid media, thereby ensuring our brand messaging is consistent and relevant across all platforms.

- **Grow social media engagements by 50%** through a combination of paid and organic posts. This will follow 105% growth in engagements in 2018-19 over 2017-18 which was achieved primarily through organic activity. Due to algorithm changes and maturation of our audiences, we can no longer plan to see the same results through organic growth only.

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**Getting Social with Community**

Visit Tucson brought its social media efforts in-house two years ago to ensure more authentic and accurate messaging that is better connected to the community we serve. And it worked! **Social engagements in 2018-19 increased 105%** over the previous fiscal year with more than 1.3 million combined engagements on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

**Our fastest growing platform is Instagram**, which added more than 15,000 new followers and generated nearly 832,000 engagements in 2018-19, increases of 53% and 98% respectively over the previous year. This was achieved by focusing on sharing spectacular images that showcased our destination and the “Free Yourself” brand. Other strategies included tracking and replicating successful posts; sharing relevant posts from other users to draw engagement; attracting attention from Instagrammers who hoped we might share their posts with our larger audience; and organizing regular take-overs with like-minded users.
Visit Tucson’s convention sales department markets metro Tucson for national and international meetings and conventions. Sales works with meeting planners locally and in target cities to generate bookings for the city’s hotels, resorts and unique meeting venues and for Tucson Convention Center. After a booking is secured, the convention services department connects the planners with partner businesses and resources. The convention services director represents Visit Tucson for the Tucson Gem, Mineral & Fossil Showcase and is liaison for show owners, operators and vendors with the City of Tucson and Pima County.

“The gem show buyers’ spending has increased because we are attracting more buyers from outside Southern Arizona. Out-of-town buyers traveled here from 42 states and 17 countries.”

**Highlights 2018-19**

- A big year for SMERF (Social, Military, Educational, Religious & Fraternal) business. Our focus on “off-peak” dates and patterns for the hotel and resort market resulted in 61 bookings, including the 2020 National Convention of USSVI (United States Submarine Veterans, Inc.) with 1,450 contracted room nights for August 2020; this was booked following a familiarization tour (FAM) for nine highly-qualified military reunion planners. To boost attendance, we will promote metro Tucson at the 2019 USSVI convention in Austin. We also secured an additional 11 qualified requests for proposals and three confirmed site visits after selling metro Tucson at the Religious Conference Management Association EMERGE tradeshow.

- Hosted 254 qualified meeting planners on FAM trips and site inspections. We welcomed 124 individual customers participating in site inspections with a current and future year value of 197,038 room nights, of which 102,703 have already been converted as definite. We hosted seven separate FAMs for 130 qualified planners. Additionally, Services sent 172 partner requests and referrals in fiscal year 2018-19, exceeding its goal by 14.6%.

- Booked 156 groups using Visit Tucson’s Master Account Incentive program, which resulted in 93,856 total contracted room nights. This successful program, which launched in 2009, credits the master accounts of qualified meeting planners who book a meeting with a minimum two peak nights. The credit amount ranges from $500 to $5,000, depending on the number of peak rooms.
The 2019 Tucson Gem, Mineral & Fossil Showcase generated $131 million in direct spending, including $13 million in local tax revenue, according to an economic impact study funded by Visit Tucson.

This year's showcase, February 2-17, encompassed 48 individual shows and an estimated 4,882 exhibitors (up from 40 shows and 4,480 exhibitors in 2014). There were an estimated 65,604 visitors to the shows, up 31.7%, and $13 million in local taxes collected – a 21.5% increase over 2014. Direct spending associated with the event increased from $120 million in 2014 to $131 million (+9%) in 2019.

These findings are from a research project conducted by Tucson-based FMR Associates, which also administered studies on the showcase in 2000, 2007 and 2014. More than 1,500 owners, exhibitors and buyers were surveyed on expenditures like food, housing and transportation to measure the direct spend, taxes and economic impact on Tucson, Pima County, Oro Valley and Marana.

Priorities 2019–20

• Develop an incentive package to attract bookings for new and planned downtown Tucson hotels. Market to meeting planners shopping for second-tier destinations offering value and unique experiences.

• Continue to sell Tucson’s strengths that match programming trends for meetings and conventions, such as using nature, sustainable culinary and health-and-wellness activities to spark creativity in meetings.

• Support continued expansion of the Tucson Fall Gem Show in September. This fall off-shoot of the winter Tucson Gem, Mineral & Fossil Showcase has grown to seven from three shows over the last few years.
TUCSON SPORTS

Visit Tucson’s sports marketing department, Tucson Sports, is charged with securing sporting events that require hotel rooms and fill venues throughout the metro Tucson area. **Tucson Sports pursues professional, amateur and youth sporting events at all levels** (regional, national and international) whose needs match the facilities and fields in Pima County, City of Tucson and Town of Oro Valley. Tucson Sports also offers local sports organizers assistance needed to grow their existing events while targeting new events to fill need periods.

**Highlights 2018-19**

- **Booked 63 collegiate rugby teams at Kino Sports Complex.** The teams, including the University of Arizona Men’s Rugby Team, participated in the USA Rugby College 7s National Championship on Memorial Day weekend. USA Rugby said this event was the largest in the tournament’s history, and coverage was live-streamed on FloRugby and posted on Visit Tucson’s Instagram page and USA Rugby Twitter.

- **Expanded relationships with pro and semi-pro international baseball teams.** As a result, Visit Tucson increased associated room nights booked by 4% in 2018-19 over 2017-18. We hosted South Korean professional teams KT Wiz, NC Dinos and Nexen Heroes for 2019 spring training, along with the Mexican League’s Tijuana Toros at Kino Sports Complex and Reid Park Annex Fields.

- **Marketed Tucson at Connect Sports’ Diversity Events Summit.** We conducted face-to-face appointments with 25 organizations, resulting in leads for at least five prospective tournaments that metro Tucson can host in 2021 and beyond. Among the summit’s 60 participants (event planners and suppliers) from 55 organizations were decision-makers from North American Gay Volleyball Association, International Gay Rugby, and National Wheelchair Basketball Association.

- **Filled almost 11,000 room nights in March 2019** through partnership with Tucson Invitational Games (TIG). The Tucson-based TIG hosted 59 collegiate baseball and 66 collegiate softball teams for spring training competitions at Lincoln Regional Park and Kino Sports Complex.

“**The USA Rugby College 7s National Championship at Kino Sports Complex turned out to be the largest event in the tournament’s history.**”
Priorities 2019-20

• Promote offerings at the expanded Kino Sports Complex using a comprehensive, dedicated media plan. Secure events compatible with Kino Sports Complex’s 12 new multipurpose, lighted fields and 20 pickleball courts, opening in early 2020. Tap into demand for soccer, rugby, lacrosse and other growing nontraditional prospects like pickleball and flag football while continuing to recruit new business in Tucson’s top three traditional sports markets (baseball, softball and soccer).

• Identify and generate leads and bookings in emerging and niche markets, from qualified sports prospects, such as women’s teams, adaptive sport competitions and LGBTQ+ leagues, working one-on-one in meetings and via hosted in-bound familiarization tours (FAMs).

• Launch the “Visit Tucson Sports Ready” program to educate the local community about opportunities to work with Tucson Sports on mutually successful events and tournaments. Host a series of information-and-networking sessions for local sports organizers, facilities, hotels, vendors and suppliers.

Women on the Rise

The 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup was the most watched in history and engaged fans on a large scale. A 2018 Nielsen Sports Women’s Research study found, “Of the 84% of general sports fans today worldwide with an interest in women’s sports, 51% of these are men, which shows both men and women can be consumers of women’s athletics.”

Visit Tucson’s plans to pursue this market in 2019-20 include:

• Mighty Mujer All-Women Triathlon. Booked for second year at Oro Valley Aquatic Center and Naranja Park in Oro Valley. Last year, this race brought in 155 registered participants and 138 finishers.

• Connect Sports’ Women in Sports Tourism Forum. The fourth annual Forum will debut a Women in Tourism component when it meets at the Westin La Paloma Resort.

• Meet Play Love Tennis. This women’s team tennis getaway has become an annual event at El Conquistador Tennis. Last year, it drew more than 50 teams with over 300 attendees.
Visit Tucson’s Mexico marketing department works to increase the number and duration of overnight stays by visitors from Mexico. The department trains partner businesses in metro Tucson to be “Mexico ready,” and creates and coordinates campaigns in Mexico that advertise Tucson as the preferred destination for shopping, dining, events and other leisure pursuits and for medical tourism. The department’s marketing program in Mexico, including two visitor centers in Sonora (in Hermosillo and in Ciudad Obregón), is branded Vamos a Tucson (“Let’s Go to Tucson”). Additionally, Mexico Marketing collaborates with government officials, economic development agencies and community leaders in Arizona and Mexico on mutually beneficial tourism and trade initiatives.

Mexico is by far the largest source of international visitors to Arizona with 3.8 million overnight trips in 2018, according to the Arizona Office of Tourism. Mexican visitors contribute an estimated $1 billion to metro Tucson’s economy every year, according to University of Arizona statistics.

**Highlights 2018-19**

- Applied successfully for Tucson’s membership in the Délice Network. Prepared and submitted Visit Tucson’s application to join the exclusive international group, which works to expand economic opportunities and promote quality of life through gastronomy-based urban development. Tucson was accepted as one of only two U.S. cities (with Chicago) in the network, which includes destinations such as Barcelona, Guangzhou, Kobe, Lyon and Montreal.

- Secured the Délice Network Gathering for Tucson in conjunction with the Agave Heritage Festival. Bringing together 35 industry leaders from 15 cities in Mexico, Europe, Asia and North and South America, this conference included educational sessions on culinary culture, panel discussions regarding best practices and local tours highlighting Tucson’s gastronomic heritage. Working in collaboration with Hotel Congress to showcase the Agave Heritage Festival, international mixologists from member cities were paired with Tucson peers and invited to participate in the festival in events that were also open to the public.

- Hosted a Tucson Health Association reception for physicians and hospital leaders. The 49 attendees represented Tucson (Banner University Medical Center, Carondelet St. Joseph’s Hospital, Northwest Healthcare, Tucson Medical Center) and Hermosillo (Hospital CIMA and Hospital San Jose). The group made plans for the Binational Health Alliance, a program to generate doctor-to-doctor referrals on both sides of the border.
Priorities 2019-20

• Promote updated Vamos a Tucson website and new Booking.com hotel reservation system in Mexico. Additionally, relocate the Visit Tucson visitor center in Hermosillo to a centrally located new building near the new U.S. Consulate in Hermosillo.

• Leverage relationships in Mexico to reinforce Tucson’s position as an international film production hub. Collaborate on Southern Arizona-Northern Sonora filmmaking exchanges and on-location filming opportunities with Film Tucson, Arizona Film Office, Office of Tourism in Sonora and producers on both sides of the border.

• Continue marketing partnership with Délice Network. Arrange for a Tucson chef to represent our city and share a local farm-to-table cooking approach at the Délice Gathering in Norway in September 2019.

• Launch the Binational Health Alliance partnership, a collaboration between Tucson Health Association and Private Hospitals of Sonora Association, intended to generate doctor-to-doctor referrals between both associations. Continue offering concierge-like services to Mexican visitors seeking medical care in Tucson via the Tucson Health Association.

Rallying the Partners

Vamos a Tucson led Visit Tucson’s response to threats that the U.S.-Mexico border would close just days before this year’s Easter holiday, a popular time for Sonora vacationers and shoppers visiting metro Tucson.

When President Trump announced that he would close the border if Mexico did not collaborate with the U.S. in stopping the flow of asylum-seekers, Tucson-bound Sonora travelers began calling the Visit Tucson-Sonora visitor centers worried they would incur penalties or be prevented from returning home if the border abruptly closed.

Vamos a Tucson rallied our partner hotels, and many offered to waive cancellation fees for anyone affected by a potential border closure.

To spread word of the offer and urge vacationers to continue with their plans, Vamos staff communicated with hotels, news media and community partners on both sides of the border and quickly executed a campaign of social media, TV and radio. As a result, Visit Tucson secured strong visitation during a peak season for Mexican visitation to metro Tucson.
**Tourism**

Visit Tucson’s tourism department promotes Tucson and Southern Arizona as a leisure destination to domestic and international receptive operators, tour operators, travel agents and group tour companies. Other duties include: conducting seminars to educate travel professionals about how best to market our destination; connecting clients directly with partner hotels and attractions using a strategic sales approach; collaborating with tour operators on cooperative advertising; and coordinating site inspections and familiarization (FAM) tours so travel professionals can experience the region first-hand.

**Highlights 2018-19**

- **Partnered with Brand USA to host 15 travel agents on a four-night FAM tour that focused on Tucson and Southern Arizona.** Each year, Brand USA coordinates a mega-FAM to bring 100+ travel agents from the U.K. and Ireland to experience different regions of the U.S. At the conclusion of this year’s FAM, all the agents gathered in Phoenix/Scottsdale for the final nights, giving us an additional opportunity to participate in one-on-one appointments with attendees who visited other regions.

- **Participated in “Boomers in Groups,” the most important Tour & Travel conference for reaching this key demographic group.** During the conference we met with 35 tour operators and promoted two, newly created itineraries especially designed to appeal to this market. For the first itinerary, we partnered with the University of Arizona to develop the “UA Science Tour” featuring a variety of campus attractions. For the second itinerary we partnered with Santa Cruz County and Diamond Transportation to develop “Destination Tubac and Tumacácori”.

- **Collaborated with nine tour operators and receptive operators on cooperative marketing campaigns to increase awareness of Tucson and Southern Arizona as a leisure destination and drive bookings through these operators.**

“Not only did the Tucson conference break attendance records, but the attendees’ positive reviews classified it as the most successful NTA Contact to date.”
The National Tour Association (NTA) hosts two meetings each year. In fall, NTA Exchange is a marketplace that brings together North American tour operators and suppliers from around the world. In spring, NTA Contact is a more intimate gathering with educational sessions, roundtable discussions and networking.

In March 2019, NTA Contact was hosted by Visit Tucson and Westward Look Wyndham Grand Resort and Spa. The welcome reception was at Tohono Chul and the closing dinner was at Old Tucson. The program included educational sessions on property and off-site excursions, and many attendees extended their stay.

Hosting NTA Contact was a chance to promote our destination to 85 key decision-makers who book and sell packaged travel. Not only did the Tucson conference break attendance records, but the attendees’ positive reviews classified it as the most successful NTA Contact to date.

Priorities 2019-20

- **Restructure the tourism department** with two sales managers focused on different geographic markets and supported by an administrative assistant. Review and evaluate tradeshows, sales missions and cooperative marketing campaigns with an emphasis on opportunities that drive measurable room nights.

- **Drive more incremental group and FIT (Fully Independent Traveler) business from Canada**, given the importance of the Canada market, by leveraging efforts of the marketing and communications departments.

- **Identify domestic and international bicycle tour operators** and collaborate with them to introduce new Tucson product or expand existing product.
Visit Tucson’s film office, Film Tucson, promotes metro Tucson and southeastern Arizona as a location for film, television and commercial advertising that generates economic impact via spending on wages, production services, lodging and rental cars. Finished productions also can raise awareness of the region as a travel destination. In an effort to make Arizona a more competitive place to film, Film Tucson advocates for statewide incentives and helps to grow the local film industry by assisting filmmakers, promoting Tucson crew and businesses, and collaborating with Tucson-based Independent Film Arizona, UA Hanson FilmTV Institute, the UA School of Theater, Film and Television, and others. Film Tucson also works with five local film festivals to host filmmaker prospects to familiarize them with the area as a production location.

**Highlights 2018-19**

- Worked closely with a new MTV series titled BORDER LIFE, which filmed for 76 days in Pima and Santa Cruz counties, booked 1,869 room nights with additional spending valued at a total of $2.3 million. The series was cast entirely with young people from Tucson, Sahuarita and Nogales. With Southern Arizona locations, cast and storylines, this 10-episode series is a likely source of invaluable publicity for Tucson among its millennial target audience.

- Targeted and secured projects that do not require government tax incentives, including reality TV, commercial advertising, both print and video, and independent feature films. Film Tucson garnered 137 leads that resulted in 53 productions bringing over 20 reality TV episodes, 10 high-profile commercial print shoots, a dozen commercials and two independent films, one of which, THE BELLMAN, was filmed at Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, among other projects. Of these, 30 were from companies outside the U.S.

- Pitched Tucson to decision-makers at three marketing events: The U.K.’s FOCUS: The Meeting Place for International Production resulted in two site visits, one indie film, and two TV episodic projects; the Sundance Film Festival resulted in three subsequent site visits by directors, one of which is a lead for a $5 million feature; the Realscreen West tradeshow resulted in negotiations for two pitches, one with the History Channel and one with NeonTV.
Priorities 2019-20

• **Distinguish Film Tucson from any other film office in the U.S.** by serving as the key contact for a “Border Ready” film program that will streamline the cross-border filmmaking process for production companies globally.

• **Collaborate with Vamos a Tucson, Arizona Film Office, Sonora Tourism Office, Tucson Cine Mexico** and other local and federal authorities, and partners in Mexico to develop, execute and market the new “Border Ready” program, which will target the international filmmaking community.

• **Develop and execute a plan to use new 2018-19 Film Tucson research** that compares a $5-million-and-under independent feature film budget for filming in Southern Arizona with an equivalent budget for filming in New Mexico where Southern Arizona comes out ahead. Market these findings to specific productions in the $5-million-and-under range to show that Tucson is the better filmmaking location.

• **Continue to increase economic impact from film productions in Southern Arizona** using innovative marketing, customer service, and collaboration with the state film office directed at projects that do not require incentive offers, such as reality TV and video and print commercial advertising productions.
PARTNERSHIP & VISITOR SERVICES

Visit Tucson’s partnership and visitor services department serves as the liaison between Visit Tucson and its travel industry partners in metro Tucson and Southern Arizona. The department provides visitors with destination information and connects them to Visit Tucson partner businesses offering local experiences that can enhance their stays. The Partnership team strengthens relationships with partners through regular communications, training sessions and exclusive events.

Highlights 2018-19

• Developed a Certified Tourism Ambassador™ (CTA) program. The CTA program aims to increase tourism by inspiring frontline hospitality employees, volunteers, and other members of the community to work together to turn every visitor encounter into a positive experience.

• Hosted 16 partner events with 950 attendees who were presented information on varied topics. The topics included industry forecasts, sales and marketing tips, using social media for different demographics, and learning about new local business partners.

• Enhanced partner engagement through personal interactions. Staff conducted more than 180 one-on-one partner benefit reviews and 186 partner visits.

Priorities 2019-20

• Offer CTA certification training to more than 100 individuals.

• Partner with Pima County to open the Southern Arizona Heritage & Visitor Center in the Historic Pima County Courthouse building.

• Engage partners with implementing the Metro Tucson Tourism Master Plan.
Let us count the ways. Answering questions. Giving directions. Referring partners. Providing transportation. These are just a few of the ways that frontline employees drive the customer experience. Our new Certified Tourism Ambassador™ (CTA) program is one way we are providing education within metro Tucson communities about the economic development potential of tourism activities.

Visit Tucson’s CTA program, Tucson Tourism Ambassador, provides comprehensive training designed to help improve the visitor experience. Frontline industry employees will learn about the wide variety of things to do here so they are better prepared for the inevitable question “what should we do while we’re here?” A focus on customer service will teach attendees how to turn complaints into compliments and ensure visitors return home with positive memories. Information about the value of tourism in this region will instill a greater understanding of the work we do and its value to the community. We will collaborate with our regional partners to promote the program to individuals and businesses so we can assist them in increasing or enhancing their travel and tourism opportunities.
BOARD SERVICE & STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Visit Tucson staff collaborated with 61 boards, committees and civic and professional organizations in fiscal year 2018-19.

- Agave Heritage Festival
- Arizona Film & Media Coalition
- Arizona Lodging & Tourism Association
- Arizona-Mexico Commission
- Arizona Society of Association Executives
- Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
- Arizona Town Hall
- Arts Foundation for Tucson and Southern Arizona
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southern Arizona
- City of Tucson
- Délice Network
- Destination Marketing Association West
- Destinations International Sales & Marketing Committee
- Downtown Tucson Partnership
- El Tour de Tucson Task Force
- Festivals & Events Association of Tucson & Southern Arizona
- Friends of Saguaro National Park
- Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona
- Governor’s Tourism Advisory Council
- Greater Tucson Leadership
- Green Valley-Sahuarita Chamber of Commerce
- Los DBacks Ambassadors
- Meeting Professionals International, Arizona Sunbelt Chapter
- NOVA Home Loans Arizona Bowl
- Park Tucson Commission
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe
- Patronato San Xavier
- Pima Association of Governments Economic Vitality Advisory Committee
- Pima Association of Governments, Regional Action Network
- Pima Association of Governments Regional Transportation Authority
- Pima Community Colleges
- Pima County
- Pima County Loop Advisory Committee
- Pima County Sports & Tourism Authority
- Rio Nuevo
- Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance
- SKAL Club of Tucson
- Southern Arizona Arts & Cultural Alliance
- Southern Arizona Attractions Alliance
- Southern Arizona Leadership Council
- Southwest Folklife Alliance
- Sun Corridor Inc.
- Tohono O’odham Gaming Enterprise
- Town of Oro Valley
- Tucson Airport Authority
- Tucson Association of Realtors
- Tucson Business Alliance
- Tucson Cine Mexico
- Tucson City of Gastronomy
- Tucson Clean & Beautiful
- Tucson Conquistadores
- Tucson Festival of Books
- Tucson Hispanic Chamber
- Tucson Jazz Festival
- Tucson Metro Chamber
- Tucson-Mexico Sister Cities
- Tucson Young Professionals
- Up with People International Alumni Association
- U.S. Department of Commerce, District Export Council
- United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, Audit Committee
- University of Arizona
Visit Tucson Staff Directory

Visit Tucson employs 39 full-time and seven part-time employees.

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