



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2025

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RECORD-BREAKING



VISION:

Grow our economic impact at a higher rate than our competitors

MISSION:

Inspire visitors to experience Wisconsin

VALUES:

Excellence, Collaboration, Balance, Fun, Authenticity

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

ABOUT US

Wisconsin Council on Tourism

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

Tourism Committees

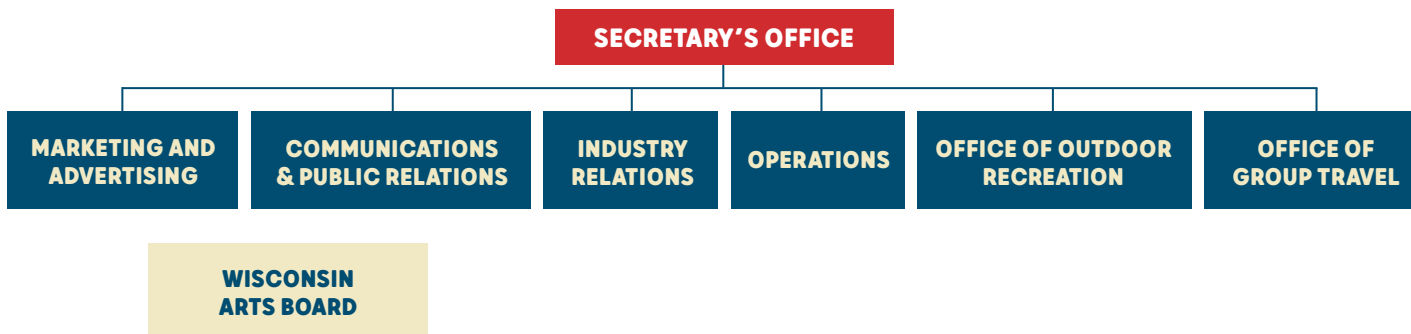
Six committees advise the agency in supporting the Department of Tourism's strategic plan.

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

Staff

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

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



AWARDS

ESTO Mercury Award, Digital and Social Campaign

U.S. Travel Association

Fall Color, Snow and Trail Seasonal Reports

Adrian Awards

Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI)

Silver Award for Public Relations Consumer Campaign, Tasty Makers

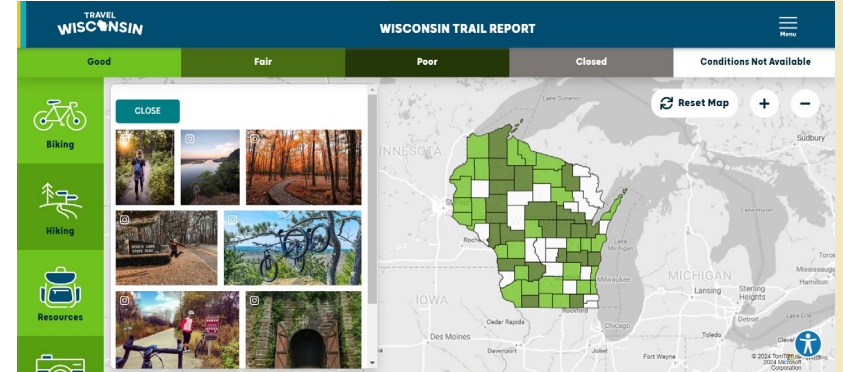
Bronze Award for Digital-Social Media Campaign, Wisconsin Flights

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

40 Under 40, Class of 2025

Milwaukee Business Journal

Maria Van Hoorn, Deputy Secretary



FOOD&WINE

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

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

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



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



FROM TOURISM SECRETARY ANNE SAYERS



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

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



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

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

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

Take care and happy trails,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne N. Sayers".

Secretary Anne Sayers



2024 ECONOMIC IMPACT

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



\$25.8 billion
total economic
impact



114.4 million
visits



182K
full- and part-time
jobs supported



MARKETING

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

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

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

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY MARKETING METRICS

1.5 billion

Advertising impressions

17.2 million

Website sessions

14.2 million

Social media reach (*organic only*)



PUBLIC RELATIONS

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

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

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

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY PUBLIC RELATIONS METRICS

1,132

Media hits

114

Media engaged at
conferences and desksides

8.1 billion

Impressions

53

Media visits

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY CONTENT CREATOR METRICS

7.1 million

Content creator impressions

22

Content creator partnerships

2.7%

Engagement rate
(1.5% industry standard)

244

Posts



2025 NFL DRAFT

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

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

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

NFL DRAFT KEY CONTENT CREATOR METRICS

4.6 million impressions

3.4% engagement rate

8 content creator partnerships

107 posts

NFL DRAFT KEY MARKETING METRICS

22K sweepstakes entries

1.1 million broadcast advertising impressions during Draft week

52.4 million radio sweepstakes impressions (February-April)



CO-OP PROGRAM

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

CALENDAR YEAR 2024 KEY CO-OP PROGRAM METRICS

12

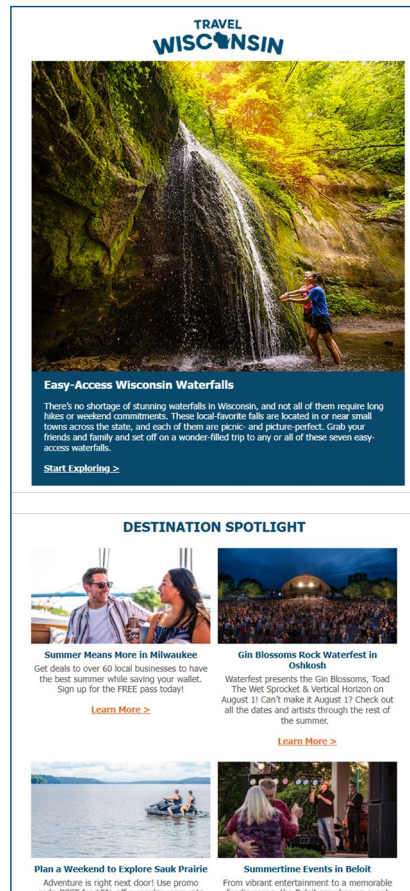
Total Co-op offerings

114

Unique partners participated

\$193,000

In partner investments



9:05 AM

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

10:38 AM

Oh my goodness this makes me SO happy!!

INDUSTRY RELATIONS

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

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY INDUSTRY RELATIONS METRICS

246 seasonal reporters recruited

291 Travel Green members

11 webinars hosted

8,243 resource downloads

644 WIGCOT registrants

66 Governor's Tourism Award nominees

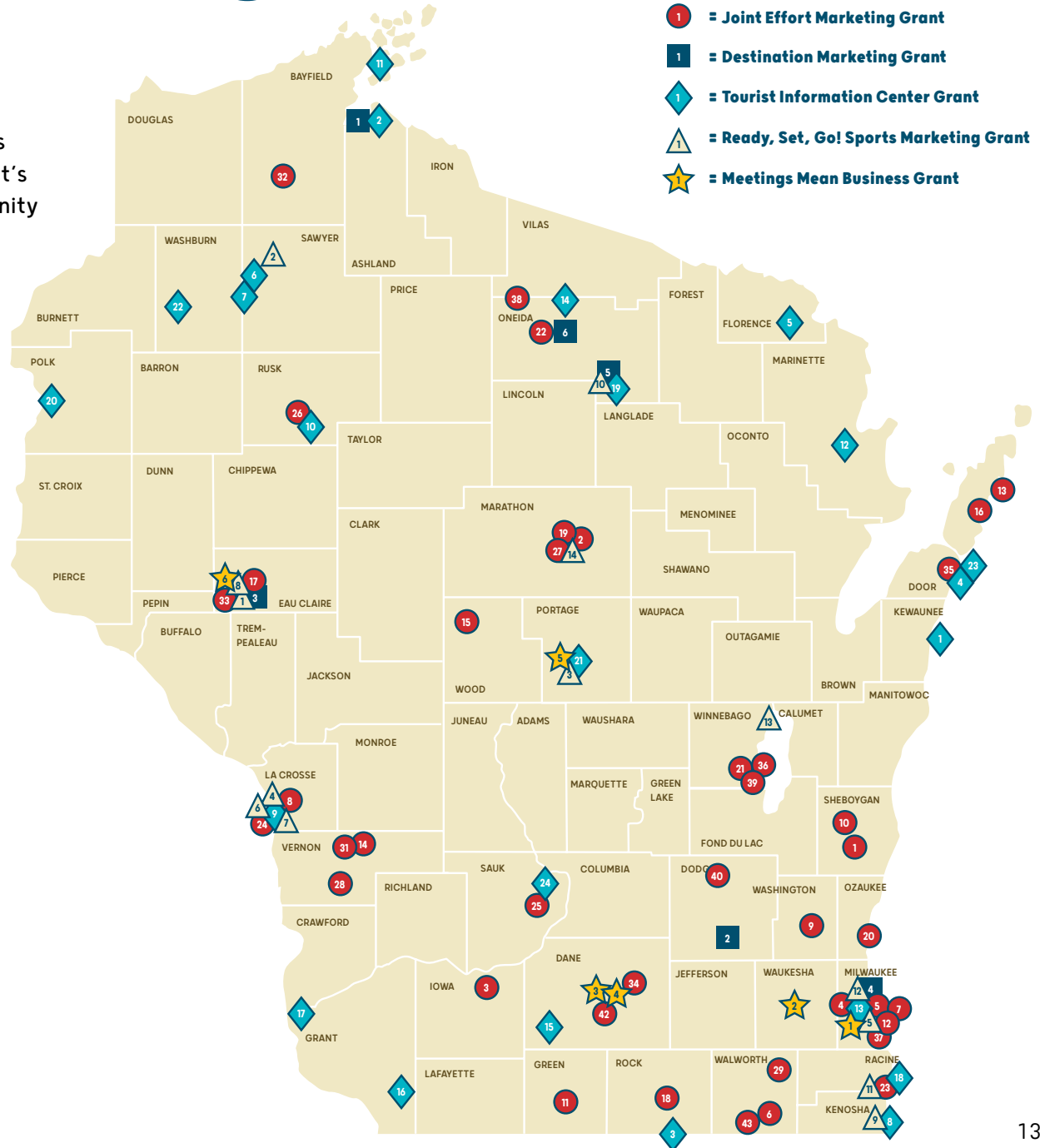


GRANT PROGRAMS

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

GRANT AWARD AMOUNTS (FISCAL YEAR 2025)

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



OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

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

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

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

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

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY OUTDOOR RECREATION METRICS

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



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT TRAIL

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

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

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

AFAR

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

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



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

**WONDERS
OF WISCONSIN**

TRAVEL
WISCONSIN

 **TALIESIN**

 **TALIESIN**
PRESERVATION

TRIBAL TOURISM

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

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

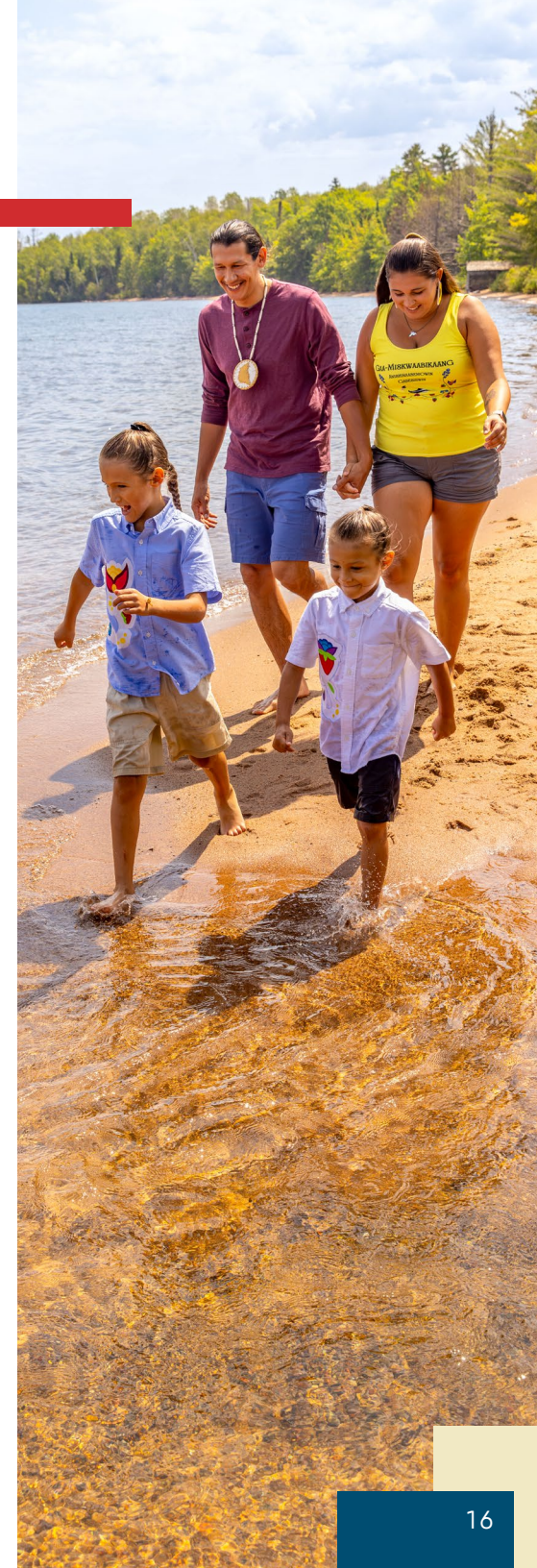
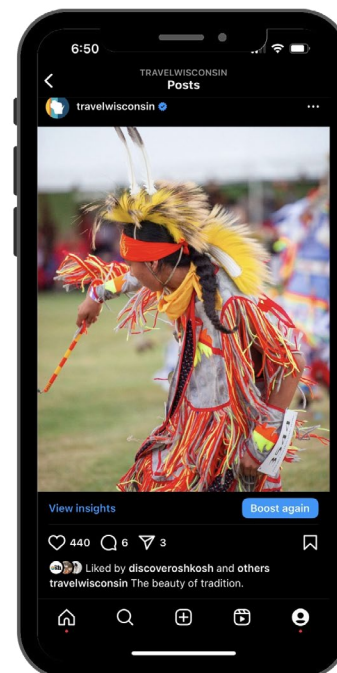
Marketing uplifted Tribal tourism with a featured insert about powwows in the Wisconsin Traveler publication, showcasing Frog Bay Tribal National Park in the 30-second summer 2025 brand campaign and in social posts throughout the year. Other areas of engagement included partnering with Native American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

LEXINGTON
HERALD LEADER

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



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



OFFICE OF GROUP TRAVEL

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

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

FISCAL YEAR 2025 KEY GROUP TRAVEL METRICS

18 industry trade shows attended and/or sponsored

215 scheduled appointments at trade shows

14 partner site tours conducted

65 partners collaborated with at trade shows

63 RFPs generated



BUDGET

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

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



CONTACT INFORMATION



Wisconsin Department of Tourism

3319 W Beltline Hwy | PO Box 8690

Madison, WI 53708-8690

(608) 266-2161

Travel Wisconsin Social Media



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



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



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



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

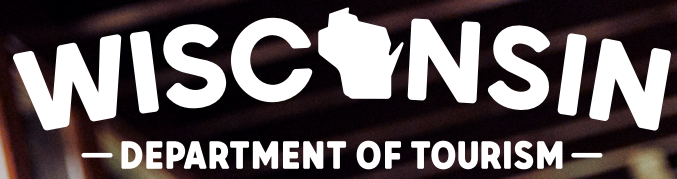
Industry Social Media



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

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





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12	<u>Industry Relations</u>		

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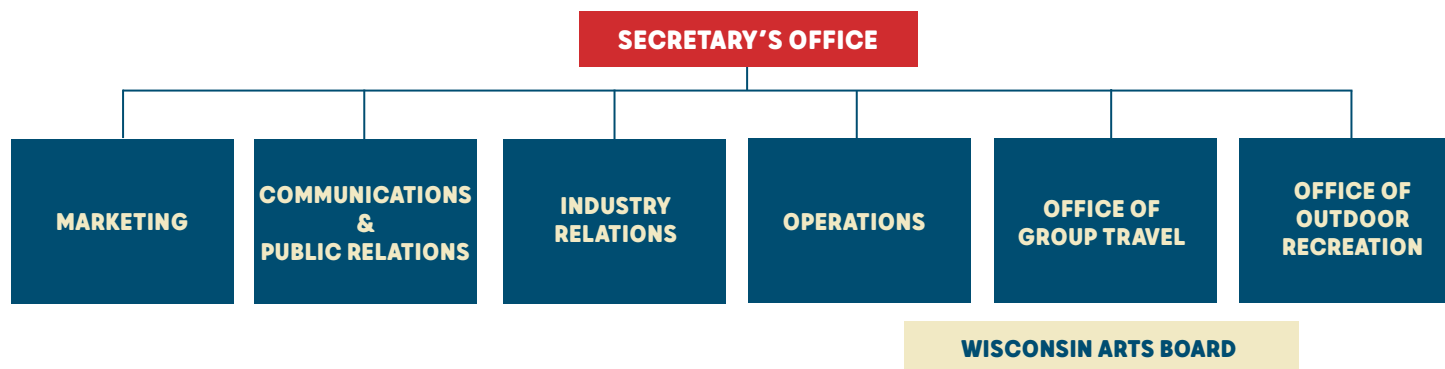
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AWARDS

ESTO Mercury Award, Public Relations Campaign

U.S. Travel Association

Tasty Makers Public Relations Campaign

Adrian Awards

Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI)

Gold Award for Public Relations Feature Placement Article: Ashlea Halpern - for online article in [Condé Nast Traveler](#)

Gold Award for Public Relations Consumer Campaign: Tasty Makers

Silver Award for Digital - Social Media Campaign: Wisconsin in Color

Silver Award for Integrated Campaign Business to Consumer: Events Campaign

Bronze Award for Advertising Brand Campaign: Wisconsin Tourism Brand Campaign

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

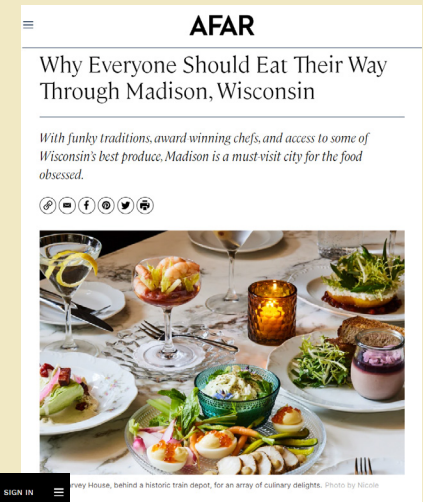
HSMAI

Craig Trost, Communications Director

WisCOMsin Awards, Communicator of the Year

Public Relations Society of America, Madison and Northeast Wisconsin Chapters

Craig Trost, Communications Director



FROM TOURISM SECRETARY ANNE SAYERS



Wisconsin isn't just having a moment; we've officially arrived on the national stage (hello, Top Chef, more on that on page 8)! As I reflect on the past year, I realize this is only possible because of the destinations, places and, importantly, the people who make up the Wisconsin tourism industry. There's no doubt tourism powers our economy - to the tune of a record-breaking \$25 billion in economic impact in 2023! But tourism also connects our communities in seen and unseen ways. Tourism gives entrepreneurs an outlet to pursue their passions. It allows families to pass on beloved businesses generation after generation. It creates an ecosystem of driving economic prosperity, of perpetuating joy and, in turn, strengthening the fabric of our entire state. This [video](#) does a great job of telling just a few of the personal stories that make up our magnificent industry.



I'm so appreciative of our industry partners, from destination marketing organizations to business owners, our outstanding hospitality workers, and everyone in between. I'm grateful for the support of Governor Evers. No one holds a deeper passion for tourism, and his enthusiasm for our sector consistently shines. I also want to thank the incredible bipartisan group of elected officials, without whose support, none of our work would be possible. Finally, thanks to the hardworking staff of the Department of Tourism. Not only are they dedicated to data-informed strategies, but the team also operates with a profound sense of pride for our state. We are privileged to have the responsibility of showcasing Wisconsin as the ultimate destination for travelers looking to create shared moments of joy with loved ones.

My heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who plays a part in sustaining this essential pillar of Wisconsin's economy.



Take care and happy trails,

Anne N. Sayers

Secretary Anne Sayers



2023 ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Department of Tourism is Wisconsin's smallest cabinet agency, with a base budget of just \$18,245,500 * out of Wisconsin's total \$48.9 billion appropriations for fiscal year 2024-2025. Despite this, tourism's economic impact is tremendous. Wisconsin tourism's record-breaking \$25 billion economic impact in 2023 marks back-to-back record years for tourism and demonstrates an incredible return on investment for Wisconsin. All 72 counties saw year-over-year growth. The data shows that consumers are prioritizing travel and when they do, they're choosing Wisconsin. The historically strong economic impact was fueled by record-setting overnight visitation driven by savvy, strategic marketing investments, as well as investments tourism businesses made in goods, supplies and services.



\$25 billion
total economic
impact



113 million
visitor trips

**The Arts Board is an attached board to the Department of Tourism for budgeting purposes, but operates independently of the Department. This figure is not inclusive of the Arts Board's budget.*



INTEGRATED CULINARY CAMPAIGN

Landing the Wisconsin season of Bravo's reality TV cooking competition, Top Chef, thrust our culinary chops right where they belong: the national (and international) spotlight. The "Top Chef effect" had an immediate impact and is expected to last for years. Over its previous 20 seasons, the show has been broadcast and streamed in 185 different territories. Its massive, dedicated audience, results in viewership of up to 6 million people per episode.

Altogether, twelve 75-minute episodes served as infomercials to global audiences, showcasing the undiscovered, flavorful food scene in Wisconsin that impresses everyone from families to foodies to James Beard judges. It spotlighted Indigenous communities and Wisconsin's Frank Lloyd Wright Trail, introduced Wisconsin as the cranberry capital of the world, and featured the largest producer-only farmers market in America, which perennial judge Tom Colicchio described as "probably the best farmers market in the world."

In order to maximize this all-eyes-on-us moment for Wisconsin, the Travel Wisconsin team cooked up an integrated paid, earned and owned media campaign. This included Travel Wisconsin's first national TV ad and its largest national public relations effort. Through broadcast and digital ads, social media, a dedicated landing page on TravelWisconsin.com, a culinary sweepstakes, Travel Wisconsin's Foodie Pass, out-of-home advertisements, print inserts, earned media stories and partnerships with social media content

creators, we introduced travelers to even more of Wisconsin's unexpected culinary destinations.

A collaborative relationship with Bravo led to a red-carpet premiere that included all three on-camera Bravo talent and several of the "cheftestants." In fact, Bravo said they've never had a destination be so creative about - and dedicated to - creating lift from the show's exposure.

Thank you to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Visit Milwaukee, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, Destination Madison, Destination Door County and Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association for being champions of Wisconsin's culinary scene and helping us leverage this national moment.



PUBLIC RELATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

118 billion

earned media impressions

12,560

earned media articles

21

media hosted

MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS

249.8 million

impressions across paid media driving to culinary content

650,000

visitors to culinary content on TravelWisconsin.com

9.3 million

estimated impressions for the national broadcast ad

MARKETING

Travel Wisconsin's campaigns continued to champion the brand idea of "Here's to Those Who Wisconsin," highlighting Wisconsin's celebratory spirit and unforgettable experiences with both a geographically and demographically expanded footprint. One-time funds allowed us to add Marquette, Michigan, as a 13th media market and broaden the age range of our target audience.

In addition to the brand campaigns, two new content series launched with supporting digital campaigns. The Wonders of Wisconsin campaign promotes the diverse and captivating places that leave people saying, "Wow, that's in Wisconsin!?" through a variety of channels and tactics. The Wonders of Wisconsin is a bucket list of sorts, to motivate travelers to book the trip and build out itineraries that take in nature, art, culture, culinary attractions and more in the surrounding areas.

Here's to Being Here is Travel Wisconsin's episodic travel series designed to showcase the unique experiences and shared moments of joy that await travelers in Wisconsin. Through immersive storytelling, we invite travelers to envision themselves and their travel partners experiencing our state. The first-person narrative technique captivates audiences, ultimately inspiring them to plan their next unforgettable vacation and create lasting memories. This unique approach speaks directly to the viewing preferences of our target audience, who value authentic, real-life experiences and seek a destination with a lot of activities and options.

FISCAL YEAR 2024 KEY METRICS

1.7 billion

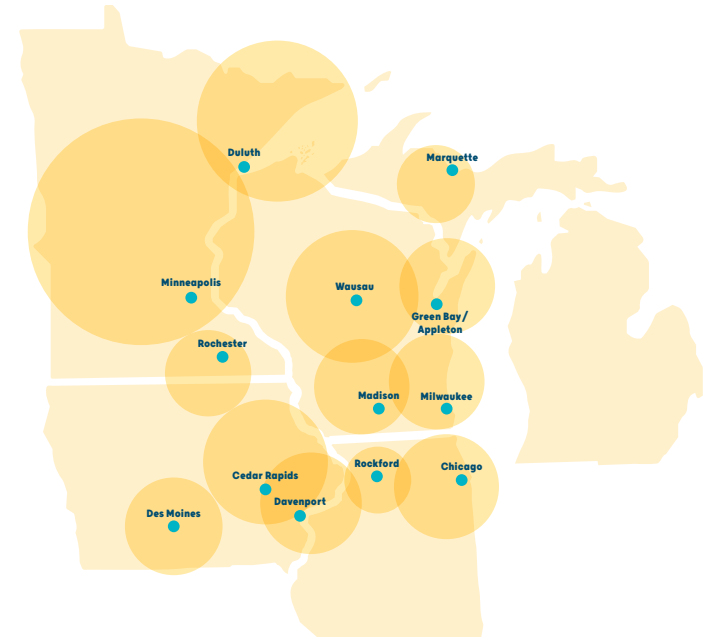
advertising impressions

13.2 million

record-breaking web sessions

313.8 million

social media reach (*Facebook and Instagram*)



PUBLIC RELATIONS

Travel Wisconsin's public relations campaigns complemented marketing campaigns by building brand awareness, improving perception and extending the brand's reach beyond the advertising budget. This happens through a continuous cycle of identifying key media contacts, building relationships and proactively pitching unique stories. Wisconsin hosted individual and small group familiarization trips to showcase Wisconsin's tourism offerings firsthand. The team also attended in-person and virtual deskside visits to engage with writers and inspire them to visit Wisconsin to discover deeper opportunities for storytelling.

Travel Wisconsin has effectively harnessed the power of content creators, recognizing their increasing value in adding third-party credibility and weaving authentic narratives. Through ongoing interaction with such creator-driven content, visitors are discovering intriguing aspects about Wisconsin, sparking inspiration for their travel itineraries.

FISCAL YEAR 2024 KEY PUBLIC RELATIONS METRICS

1,068

stories

6.77 billion

impressions

128

virtual or in-person deskside appointments

53

media visits

FISCAL YEAR 2024 KEY CONTENT CREATOR METRICS

15

content creator partnerships

6.27 million

content creator impressions

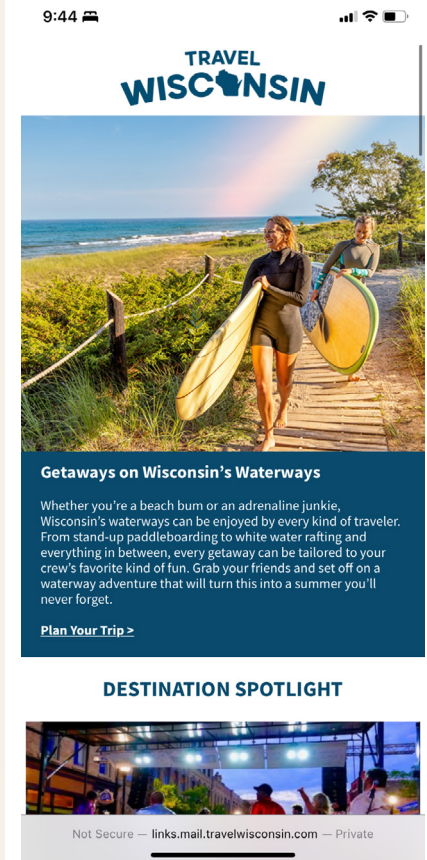
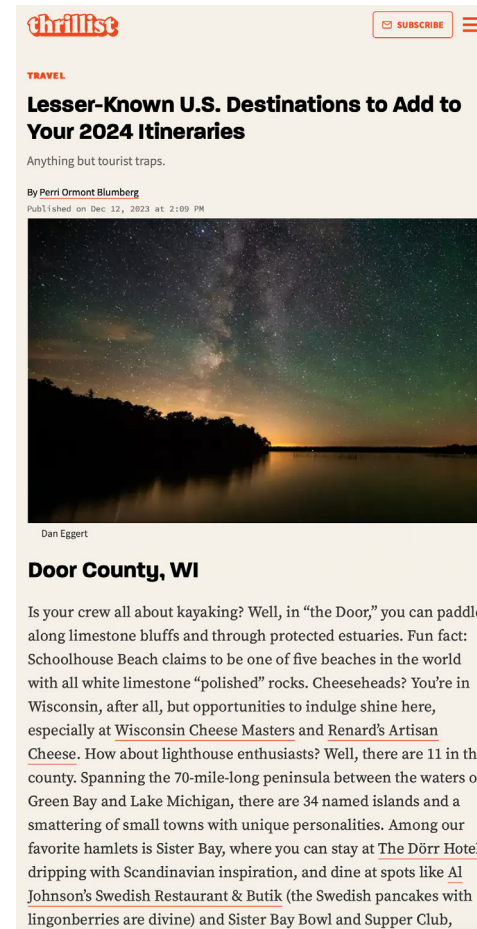
4.34%

engagement rate (1.8% industry standard)



CO-OP PROGRAM

The Travel Wisconsin Co-op is designed to amplify Travel Wisconsin's promotional strategies in partnership with the industry to deliver the greatest economic impact possible. Annual offerings engage partners big and small across the state in shared vision and goals on a calendar year cadence. The Co-op gives partners opportunities to stretch their dollars further, try new promotional tactics and programs, and amplify their promotional strategies that would otherwise be budgetarily unattainable. These promotional program opportunities include email marketing, special offers, content creator partnerships, and broadcast and podcast interviews to name a few. The 2023 Co-op included 302 partnerships with a partner investment of \$180,390.



INDUSTRY RELATIONS

Travel Wisconsin's industry relations programs provide the collaborative communication needed for the industry to share their on-the-ground experience with Travel Wisconsin and for Travel Wisconsin to provide relevant support. Each week, the industry relations team engages tourism partners with resources, including grant programs, website listings, email newsletters, webinars and the Travel Green program. In fiscal year 2024, over 270 partners downloaded the industry toolkit resources for the brand campaign, Here's to Being Here travel series and Travel Wisconsin's Foodie Pass. Additionally, the industry team recruited and coordinated with nearly 300 volunteers to contribute to the Wisconsin Trail, Fall Color and Wisconsin Snow Reports to maintain the popular, consumer-facing seasonal reports on TravelWisconsin.com. In 2023, more than 185,000 people from around the world visited the six state-supported Wisconsin Welcome Centers.

The Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism (WIGCOT) is an annual event that connects industry partners, provides expert-led training and shares the excitement and strategy of Travel Wisconsin campaigns. This year's conference at the Grand Geneva in Lake Geneva saw more than 780 registered attendees and 62 nominees for the Governor's Tourism Awards.



**HERE'S TO
BEING HERE**

Discover delicious with Travel Wisconsin's Foodie Pass. Sign up and unlock exclusive deals at tasty locations across Wisconsin including James Beard Award winning and nominated restaurants, iconic Wisconsin supper clubs, craft breweries, local culinary gems and more. Earn points as you travel by fork across Wisconsin and redeem fun prizes along the way.

What are you waiting for? Grab your pass, pack your appetite and get ready to savor the flavors of Wisconsin one bite or sip at a time!

HOW IT WORKS:

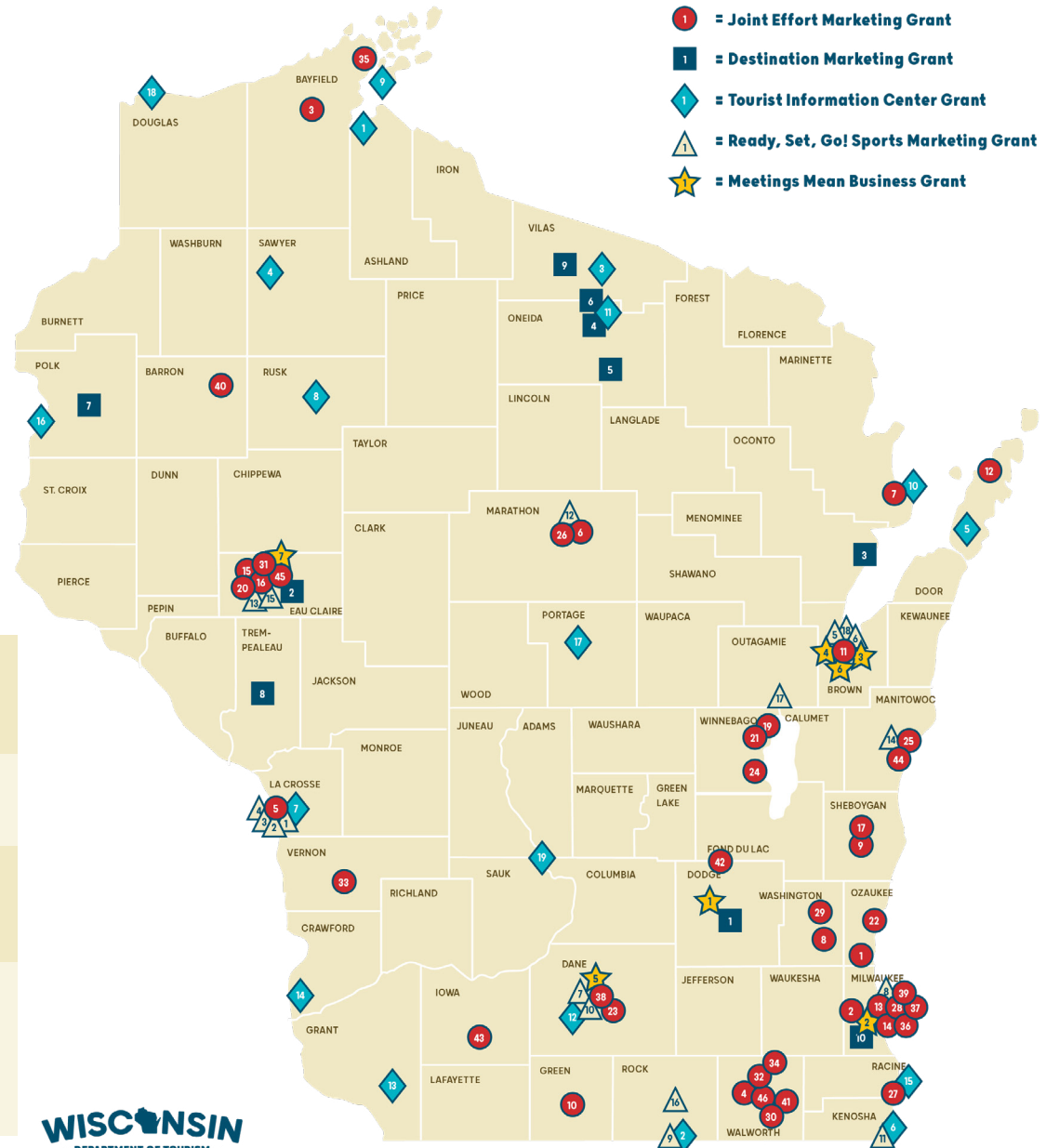
- Receive a text or e-mail with a link to your passport
- Show your phone at partner locations to redeem savings
- Check-in at the location to qualify for prizes

TravelWisconsin.com/FoodiePass

GRANT AWARDS

GRANT AWARD AMOUNTS (FISCAL YEAR 2024)

JOINT EFFORT MARKETING	\$1,136,913. ^{.84}
READY, SET, GO!	\$145,391. ^{.38}
MEETINGS MEAN BUSINESS	\$74,608. ^{.62}
TOURISM INFORMATION CENTER	\$160,000



WISCONSIN OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION



Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry contributed a record-breaking \$9.8 billion to the state's gross domestic product in 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The industry also supported 94,000 jobs and resulted in \$4.7 billion in employee compensation.

Outdoor recreation is indispensable to Wisconsin tourism, with travelers consistently citing the outdoors as a top reason they choose Wisconsin. As a result, travel and tourism, plus local trips, related to outdoor recreation make up a significant contribution to Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry. But the industry - and the BEA data - encompass much more than the obvious ways visitors recreate outside in Wisconsin. The industry includes the manufacturers producing equipment and gear, the retailers selling it, the guides leading excursions and a range of businesses and organizations connected to outdoor recreation.

Now in its fifth year, the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation continues to leverage these marketing strengths to grow all sectors of the outdoor recreation economy through programs like:

- Do-It-Yourself economic impact programming
- Wisconsin Outside e-newsletter
- Wisconsin Outdoor Business Directory
- Data and research library
- Travel Wisconsin seasonal reports
- Supporting Travel Wisconsin's content creator and media strategies
- Annual economic impact analysis
- Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Inventory tool
- Co-hosting the Wisconsin Healthy Communities Summit

The Office of Outdoor Recreation remained a resource for the outdoor recreation community and, through its efforts, bolstered the resilience and growth of its partners. The Office is committed to supporting a stronger, more cohesive outdoor recreation ecosystem for all and driving economic impact across the state.



TRIBAL TOURISM

The Department of Tourism is proud to help travelers experience the distinct traditions and cultural heritage of Wisconsin's 11 federally recognized tribal nations. Native culture is the foundation of our state's story and provides incredible experiences for travelers to enjoy.

Season 21 of Top Chef took an exciting turn with its spotlight on Indigenous foods, incorporating the rich flavors and diverse [culinary traditions](#). Two renowned Wisconsin chefs, Elena Terry from Wild Bearies and Bryce Stevenson of Mijjim, were featured as special guests, introducing the contestants and audience to authentic Indigenous dishes. Their participation not only added a unique twist to the culinary competition but also brought important recognition to Indigenous cuisine, showcasing its vital role in the culinary world and Wisconsin.

Throughout the fiscal year, Travel Wisconsin spotlighted indigenous travel in eight social media posts, our official travel guide, advertorials in the Traveler magazine, four TravelWisconsin.com articles and our summer brand campaign where a Red Cliff/Miskwaabikaang family was featured enjoying time together at Frog Bay Tribal National Park. The public relations team pitched and hosted media to experience Wisconsin's tribal offerings which resulted in 16 earned media placements in outlets including [Matador Network](#), [UPROXX](#), [From Scratch](#), [Chicago Tribune](#), [AFAR](#) and [WTMJ](#).



Images courtesy of Bravo's Top Chef



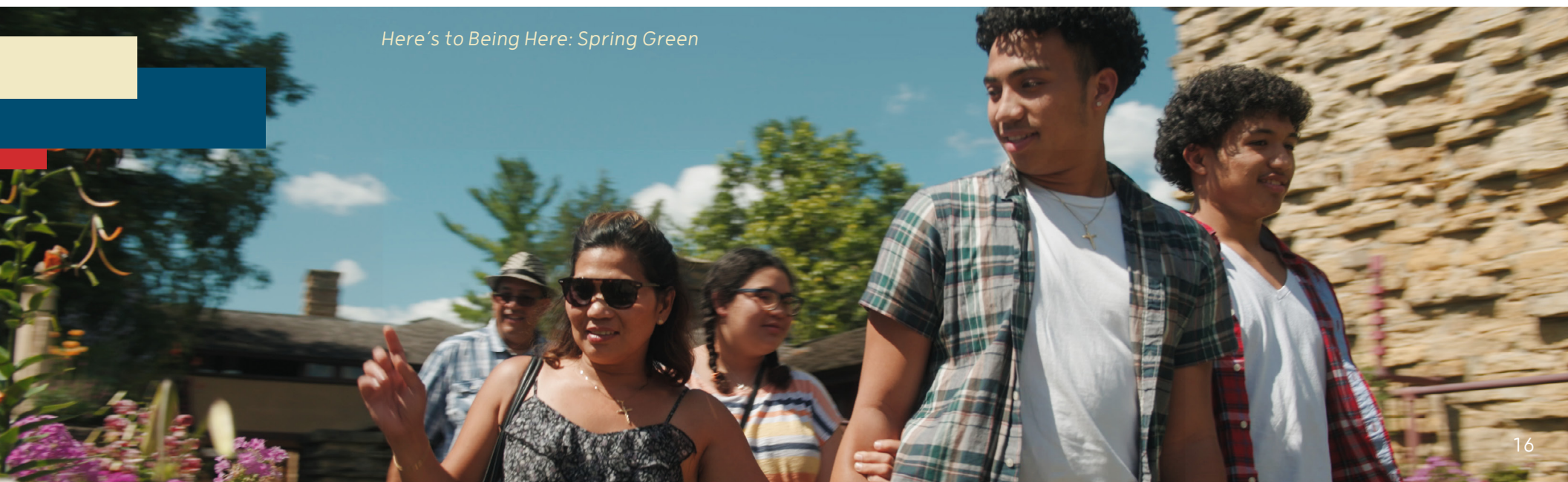
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT TRAIL

Since its launch in 2017, the Frank Lloyd Wright Trail has been a valuable storytelling opportunity both nationally and internationally, garnering worldwide media coverage and drawing travelers from near and far. The trail took center stage in Season 21 of Bravo's Top Chef during episode four, "[The Wright Way](#)."

Taliesin, Wisconsin's only UNESCO World Heritage Site open to the public, was a highlight of the [fall brand campaign](#) and [Wonders of Wisconsin](#) campaign. It was also featured in the [Spring Green](#) episode of the travel series Here's to Being Here, which saw over 114 thousand views.

In addition to the media articles surrounding the inclusion in Top Chef, the trail was mentioned in media placements in [Midwest Living](#), [Round Trip with Colleen Kelly](#), [Fox News](#) and the [Wisconsin State Journal](#).

The Frank Lloyd Wright trail was included in the 2024 Travel Guide and the Riverview Terrace Cafe is included in the Travel Wisconsin Foodie Pass. Travel Wisconsin also sent two social media content creators to Taliesin to engage new audiences in Wisconsin architecture through social media posts reaching their engaged followers.



OFFICE OF MARKETING SERVICES

The Office of Marketing Services provided marketing consultation services to other agencies, councils, commissions and boards in Wisconsin state government, providing access to skilled staff and resources to help bring big ideas to life. While the Office of Marketing Services was eliminated in the 2023-2025 biennial budget, the staff supported efforts to transition programs and projects already underway.

Projects supported by the Office of Marketing Services in fiscal year 2024 include:

Governor's Conference on Highway Safety

Governor's Cybersecurity Summit

Destinations Wisconsin's Fall Conference on Tourism

Governor's Conference on Emergency Management

Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism



OFFICE OF GROUP TRAVEL

Created with one-time funds allocated in the 2023-2025 biennial budget to grow the economic impact of group travel in Wisconsin, the Office of Group Travel (OGT) will promote bringing more meetings and conventions, sports, motorcoach and international travel to Wisconsin. With meetings and conventions, sports, motorcoach and international visitor spending estimated at \$100-\$150 billion in the US every year, the establishment of this Office is critical to future economic impact growth.

In the last fiscal year, the OGT formed a new Group Travel Committee, hired a program manager, identified priority international markets, created a partnership with Circle Wisconsin and made sure Wisconsin was well represented at the trade shows we attended. New marketing collateral includes the very first video on Wisconsin's Meetings and Conventions market featuring five state-of-the-art publicly owned meeting facilities. These materials were strategically aligned with the well-established Travel Wisconsin brand to bring cohesion to this sector.



FISCAL YEAR 2024 KEY METRICS

20

industry tradeshows attended

14

Wisconsin tourism partners joined us at tradeshows

104

appointments at B2B tradeshows

3,313

users on [Meet in Wisconsin](#) website

2,351

users on [Sports Wisconsin](#) website

23

leads generated from both Meet in Wisconsin and Sports Wisconsin websites, shared with partners throughout Wisconsin



DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM BUDGET



In fiscal year 2024, the Department of Tourism had Program Revenue receipts of \$11,838,403.89, \$39,474,112.69 of authorized General-Purpose Revenue (GPR) and \$1,603,500.00 of authorized Segregated Fund Revenue (SEG) for a total available amount to spend of \$52,916,016.58. The authorized GPR represented an approximate \$33,000,000 increase from Fiscal Year 2023, of which \$32,000,000 was one-time funding, including \$3,000,000 in earmarks for outside entities. In fiscal year 2024, Tourism had total expenses of \$22,753,847.05*, including \$2,462,784.27 of Federal expenses.

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

CONTACT INFORMATION



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Madison, WI 53708-8690

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Travel Wisconsin Social Media



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



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



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



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

Tourism Industry Social Media



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

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



PROGRAMS, GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Note: Several goals have been revised for the 2025-27 biennium.

Program 1: Tourism Development and Promotion

Goal: Enhance the tourism value to Wisconsin by growing travel-related spending.

Objective/Activity: Produce and execute marketing campaigns and earned media exposure that reaches the target audience with an on-brand message to travel to Wisconsin.

Goal: Increase the amount of spending by leisure, business, and group travelers in Wisconsin.

Objective/Activity: Continue to use all earned, owned and paid channels to market Wisconsin to first-time and repeat visitors.

Goal: Enhance the perception of Wisconsin to visitors and prospective visitors.

Objective/Activity: Communicate with visitors and prospective visitors utilizing effective branded messaging.

Goal: Uplift the entire tourism and outdoor recreation industries to realize the full potential of their economies through the Industry Relations Section and Office of Outdoor Recreation.

Objective/Activity: Align Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry to help Wisconsin claim its identity as a top outdoor recreation state for residents, visitors and businesses.

Program 3: Support of Arts Projects

Goal: Reduce the applicant, staff, peer review and board time necessary to process grants.

Objective/Activity: Develop a process that balances the work necessary to receive a grant commensurate with the amount an applicant might expect to receive.

Objective/Activity: Reduce paperwork and required supplemental materials. Obtain technological solutions, where appropriate and available.