

Connecticut Office of Tourism
FY24 STRATEGIC PLAN



CONNECTICUT
ranked the **best state**
in the country for hiking

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LETTER FROM THE CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER



Dear Industry Partners and Stakeholders:

From the moment my wife Kara and I laid roots in Connecticut for ourselves and our two children, Isabel and Julian, we've been in love with our adopted home. In just two and a half years, we've quickly learned that whether you're in Hartford or Harwinton, there is something unique to see, do, and eat, and someone in all 169 towns ready to welcome you with open arms and a smile. What we've come to appreciate most is that there is much more than what meets the eye.

As I see it, my mission as Department of Economic Community Development's first Chief Marketing Officer is to show the world what's beneath the surface of Connecticut and to change perceptions of "The Land of Steady Habits." By overseeing and integrating the Connecticut brand identity and messaging with our year-old CT Visit brand and messaging as a sister brand, we'll be better positioned to help our many inimitable offerings — and there are many — stand out and stand tall among our neighboring states. From world-class pizza in New Haven to artistic triumphs at the Wadsworth Atheneum, delicate oysters from our rich aquaculture farms along the shoreline and original works of theater produced at the Goodspeed Opera House, what we create is unexpected, unmatched, and anything but steady. The public needs us, and they're quickly catching on to this fact.

While thoughtful brand strategy and eye-catching creative are the pillars of the Office of Tourism's marketing, we're making a strong push to build critical partnerships across the tourism industry and align our many stakeholders. I firmly believe this is how we'll achieve success in the year ahead despite fewer resources. There is a hunger for collaboration among our players because we share a common goal, and if I spend all my capital on any one thing, it will be getting the industry to move as one.

When I started in this role in March, an immediate priority was to meet as many stakeholders as possible. This spring's "Listening Tour" proved invaluable, not only to meet many of the industry leaders I hadn't previously met during my time as Communications Director and Special Advisor to Governor Lamont, but also to focus our office's attention on the most important initiatives we're working on today. Several sources of tourism data support what we heard — that tourism has rebounded with a vengeance, with many metrics surpassing 2019's high water mark, and that Connecticut's tourism opportunity is still nowhere near its potential. We have spectacular momentum — and lots of work to do.

It is my profound privilege to collaborate in this effort with you, transforming Connecticut's reputation in the world and within our borders to equal the spectacular destination and home that it truly is.

Yours in service,

Anthony M. Anthony
Chief Marketing Officer



VISION, MISSION, AND POSITIONING STATEMENTS



VISION

Build a new perception of Connecticut as a world-class destination and place to call home that is vibrant, diverse, and inclusive — from the charming and historic to the novel and cutting edge.

MISSION

Drive increased awareness of Connecticut as a tourist destination, stimulate growth for the state's varied tourism sector, and maximize the economic impact for all areas of the state.

POSITIONING

Connecticut has an energy like nowhere else, a place of diverse people and experiences — from the charming and historic to the novel and cutting edge.

STRATEGIC GUIDES

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Align a new State of Connecticut brand with the year-old CTvisit brand so that all state messaging builds a cohesive perception across tourism, economic development, and all departments.
- Fuel the momentum in changing perceptions of the state, shattering the erroneous perception that the state is lackluster and enlightening the world on our true diversity, energy, and rich tapestry of offerings.
- Maximize the return on investment for our more limited marketing budget.
- Strengthen the relationship between the Tourism Office and the Regional Tourism Districts, increasing the synergy between each office's efforts.
- Continuously enhance and promote the extraordinary state asset that is CTvisit.com.
- Maintain a heavy focus on PR efforts, continuing pushes by theme and amplifying our state's accolades.
- Improve channels of communication with all tourism industry businesses to better understand our offerings and challenges so that we might unify strategies for support.
- Leverage data and research to guide informed decisions.

The pages of this FY24 Strategic Plan detail the ways in which we aim to accomplish these priorities.



TARGET AUDIENCES

DEMOGRAPHIC TARGETING

Our visitors continue to be more ethnically diverse than ever — and increasingly representative of all age brackets.

- The average age of the visitor to CT is now 42.5.
- The average household income of our visitor still skews high and continues to climb — now at \$142.8K.
- The average length of their stay increased slightly over the past year to 3.5 days.

We will continue to focus on attracting a more balanced mix of visitors for more frequent and extended stays.

For media buying purposes, our target is:

- 25-64 years old
- Household income of \$100K+
- Skews female
- ~50% have kids at home

GEOGRAPHIC TARGETING

There are two shifts we will make this year to maximize the return on investment of our tourism marketing budget.

1. We will sharpen the focus of our geographic target on our best-performing audiences:
 - Connecticut
 - New York
 - Massachusetts
 - Rhode Island
2. We will slightly increase the priority of our in-state marketing while keeping the vast majority of our budget allocated for increasing out-of-state visitation.

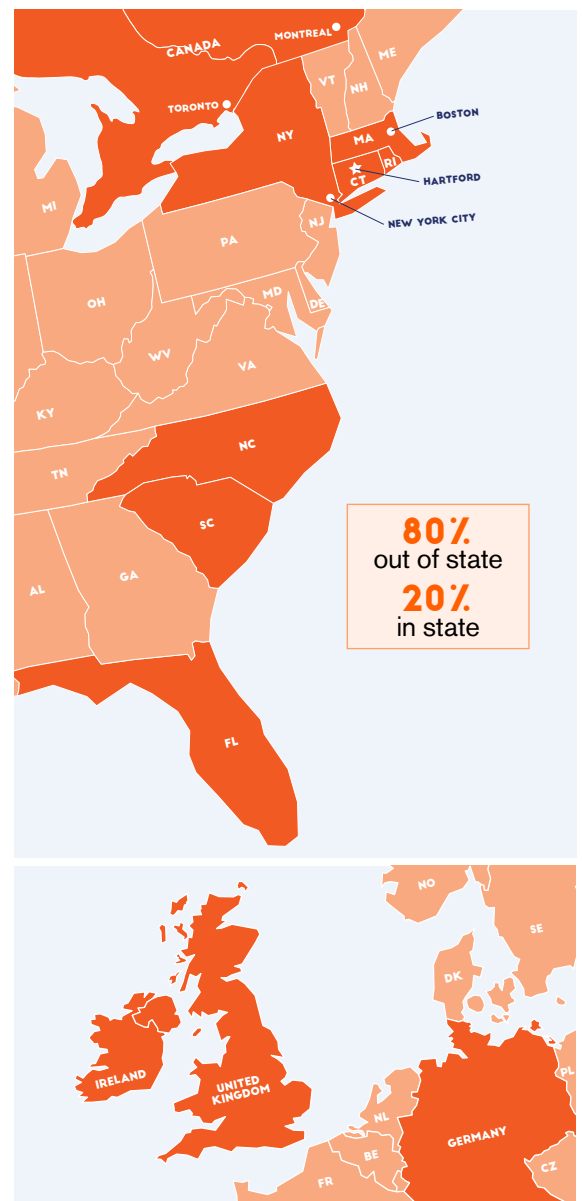
Key domestic fly markets

Working within our new budget, we will sharpen our focus on our most critical domestic fly in markets that support flights into both Bradley International Airport and Tweed New Haven Airport.

- Florida
- North Carolina
- South Carolina

Target international markets

We will sharpen our international focus in support of the Aer Lingus Dublin/Hartford flight.



Targeting by interest

The data is clear that one of our most successful tactics has been targeting themed creative messages to specific, relevant audiences. The tools for this type of targeting continuously get smarter and more efficient.

This year, we will continue to develop new specific messaging and target it to the exact audiences most receptive to each message. This messaging/targeting approach will support the following audience categories:

- Families with children at home
- Arts, culture, and entertainment seekers
- History lovers
- Outdoor enthusiasts
- LGBTQ+ community
- Foodies
- Green/Sustainability-focused audience
- Wellness/Relaxation hunters
- Young adults and empty nesters





PAID MARKETING

The Office of Tourism uses paid advertising to create a desired brand perception, increase awareness, and drive visitation to as many businesses as possible in all areas of the state.

COT will use an integrated array of paid advertising tactics to reach our target audiences. Tactics are chosen based on their ability to impact our goals at the best possible return on investment, particularly by measuring lift in actual visitation-derived tax revenues attributable to marketing activities.

GOAL 1: BUILD ON MOMENTUM IN CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Paid advertising will perform a significant role in continuing to change the state's perceptions and brand personality via the tourism lens.

STRATEGY:

Across all tactics and all communication touchpoints with the CTvisit brand, we will support the established look, feel, and energy.

TACTICS:

- Continue the Find Your Vibe campaign, which data shows is highly effective in changing brand perceptions and increasing interest in visiting Connecticut (See data details in Analytics section of this document)
- Support the CTvisit brand personality in all advertising touchpoints
 - Present a younger, more energetic vibe
 - Show social, ethnic, and cultural diversity
 - Highlight surprising and unique experiences
 - Feature more artsy, creative, and innovative offerings
- But this year, we are making some adjustments to the “vibes”. In addition to the more surprising aspects of our state listed just above, we will mix in a few more of the classic and beloved experiences available while showing them with a contemporary perspective. Experience types that will increase in our mix include:
 - Charming architecture and towns
 - Family fun
 - History
 - Iconic attractions

GOAL 2: DRIVE REVENUES

Inspire increased revenues for as many businesses in the industry as possible.

STRATEGY:

Feature and drive referrals to as many businesses as possible in advertising.

TACTICS:

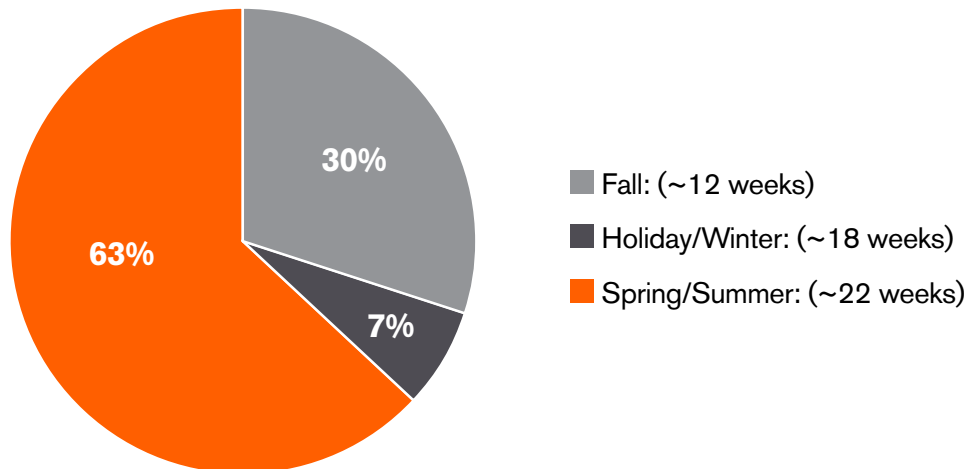
- Use CTvisit.com as the call to action for all paid communications
- Favor advertising executions that feature as many different businesses as possible:
 - TV/digital video executions will feature multiple experiences of different types
 - OOH placements will focus on digital video capability, exposing the viewers to many different experiences in one placement
 - Digital billboards will have heavy creative rotation
- Content marketing — distributed through CTvisit.com, search, social media, and native content — will feature thousands of different experiences and businesses
- In all content on the website, optimize for generating referrals/leads directly to businesses in the form of clicks to their sites and booking engines, as well as their emails and phone calls

GOAL 3: CONTINUE TO PRESENT CONNECTICUT AS A 4-SEASON DESTINATION

Promote Connecticut's four distinct seasons, each providing unique leisure experiences, and ensure an "always on" promotion of those seasons throughout the year.

STRATEGY I:

Allocate the budget to support each season as follows:



STRATEGY 2: ALIGN MESSAGES TO EACH AND EVERY SEASON

Since each season brings a different array of seasonal activities, and our competitive strengths vary season to season, we will provide season-specific creative that moves from one to the next in an “always on” program

TACTIC:

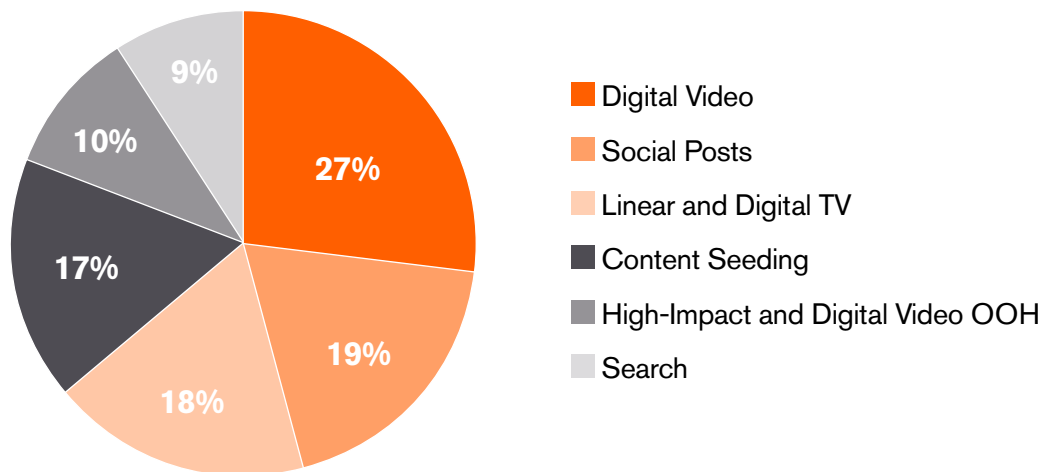
- The ongoing, year-round campaign will feature new creative with each season, always showcasing season-specific experiences just before and during each of these four seasons:
 - Fall (September-November)
 - Holiday (mid-November-December)
 - Winter (January-March)
 - Spring/Summer (April-August)

STRATEGY 3: INTEGRATE ARRAY OF TACTICS, FROM BROAD REACH TO HIGHLY TARGETED

Although tighter budgets this year increase the priority of the lower-funnel tactics, data shows us that our broad-reach tactics not only promote greater awareness of our offerings and help change brand perceptions, but also increase the efficiency of all our tactics.

TACTIC:

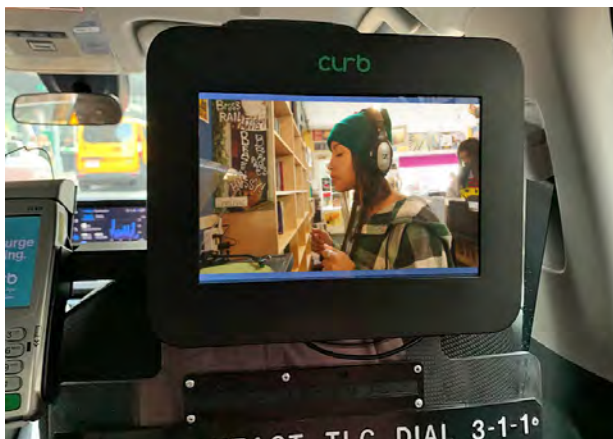
- Continue to support and optimize a mix of integrated tactics as follows:



EXAMPLES OF PLANNED PLACEMENTS

- Taxi/ride share seat back screen video
- LinkNYC
- Jet Blue seat backs
- Moynihan Penn Station
- Bradley Airport baggage claim video screens
- Boston large-format digital OOH at street level
- CT OOH billboards

TAXI/RIDE SHARE SEAT BACK SCREEN VIDEO:
Spring/Summer



LINKNYC:
Fall and Spring/Summer



JET BLUE SEAT BACKS: On all Jet Blue flights into and out of NYC (JFK, LGA, EWR), Boston (BOS), CT (BDL), and Albany (ALB)



BRADLEY AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM VIDEO SCREENS:

Fall and Spring



BOSTON LARGE-FORMAT DIGITAL OOH:

At Street Level



MOYNIHAN PENN STATION:

Spring/Summer



PROGRAM OF WORK: FY23-24

JULY-AUGUST 2023

- Continue the summer campaign that began in FY23
- Refresh the Find Your Vibe campaign for fall with new imagery and inclusions
- Develop FY24 media plan
- Update all performing CTvisit.com content
- Create additional, new CTvisit.com fall content

EARLY SEPTEMBER-MID-NOVEMBER 2023

- Launch and continually optimize the fall campaign
- Refresh holiday/winter creative and content
- Create additional, new CTvisit.com holiday/winter content

LATE NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

- Launch and continually optimize the holiday campaign

JANUARY-MARCH 2024

- Launch and continuously optimize the winter campaign
- Refresh the Find Your Vibe campaign for spring/summer with new imagery, inclusions, and treatments
- Update all performing CTvisit.com content
- Create additional, new CTvisit.com spring/summer content

APRIL-JULY 2024

- Launch and continuously optimize spring/summer campaign



PUBLIC RELATIONS

The communications division of the Connecticut Office of Tourism is responsible for managing public relations, media, and event coordination with the goal of generating increased awareness and interest in the state's many tourism offerings. The team works closely with national, regional, and local media and influencers, and attends key industry events to secure positive coverage about Connecticut.

GOAL 1: RAISE AWARENESS AS A PREMIER TRAVEL DESTINATION

Position Connecticut as a leading travel destination in the United States, characterized by a unique personality and allure.

STRATEGY 1:

Secure editorial story features across a diverse spectrum of national, regional, and local media — encompassing lifestyle, travel, arts/entertainment, and food/beverage categories.

TACTICS:

Discover, curate, and publicize fresh and unique story angles related to Connecticut's tourism attractions, engaging new and diverse audiences.

- Tailor story pitches to the specific interests of each media outlet, highlighting how the state's tourism narrative aligns with their audience and content style
- Curate press trips for highly selective national/regional travel media
- Leverage existing media relationships and earned partnerships with Connecticut media properties to further promote the state as a prime staycation destination to residents
- Secure and coordinate media interviews for key spokesperson(s)
- Respond swiftly to incoming requests for information/collateral

STRATEGY 2:

Establish a significant presence as a valuable resource for the nation's most influential lifestyle/travel media outlets, creating new opportunities for presenting both short- and long-term editorial narratives.

TACTICS:

- **Relationships:** Build and nurture relationships with journalists, editors, and content creators in the lifestyle and travel media industry. Connect with them through networking events, social media, and personalized outreach.
- **Provide Quality Content:** Offer well-researched and compelling content that aligns with the interests of target media outlets. This can include expert insights, data-driven stories, and exclusive access to events or experiences.
- **Offer Exclusive Access:** Provide media outlets with unique access to behind-the-scenes experiences, events, attractions, accommodations, or locations related to Connecticut's tourism offerings

- **Monitor Trends:** Stay updated on current travel and lifestyle trends to identify opportunities for timely and relevant story angles
- **Enhance Media Kit:** Continuously update the tourism media kit that includes high-quality images, engaging videos, relevant statistics, and key information about Connecticut's tourism offerings, making it easy for journalists to access and use this content
- **Pitch Tailored Stories:** Tailor story pitches to the specific interests of each media outlet, highlighting how the state's tourism narrative aligns with their audience and content style
- **Provide Expert Spokespersons:** Offer knowledgeable spokespersons who can speak about the unique aspects of Connecticut's tourism offerings. This can include local experts, artists, chefs, historians, and more.
- **Leverage Social Media:** Utilize social media platforms to share engaging stories, captivating visuals, and insider tips related to Connecticut's attractions
- **Host Press Trips:** Organize press trips for highly selective media to experience Connecticut. This immersive experience can lead to more authentic and impactful coverage
- **Measure Impact:** Track the impact of media efforts by monitoring media coverage, engagement metrics, and the overall reach of tourism campaigns.
- **Attend Industry Events:** Participate in relevant industry events, trade shows, and conferences to network with media professionals and showcase Connecticut's offerings
- **Create Editorial Calendar:** Create a comprehensive editorial calendar outlining story concepts, publication schedules, and target audiences for editorial news pieces year-round
- **Collect Stories:** Collect news updates, story concepts, and accompanying materials, including imagery, from Connecticut's tourism businesses through industry emails/portals, integrating them into pitching initiatives
- **Establish a Speakers Bureau:** Establish a Speakers Bureau featuring tourism business proprietors and managers who can promptly address pertinent media inquiries

GOAL 2: RAISE AWARENESS OF IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM TO RESIDENTS

Generate awareness of the economic impact of Connecticut's tourism industry among key audiences/stakeholders.

STRATEGY:

Utilize proprietary research and economic data to create pitches/story angles highlighting the importance of the industry to the local economy.

TACTICS:

- Produce and/or aggregate research and data to share with key audiences/stakeholders
- Utilize key messages and media talking points to highlight the importance of the tourism industry to Connecticut's economy
- Develop speaker's bureau of tourism industry leaders, including associations, who can quickly respond to relevant media requests

GOAL 3: BUILD INDUSTRY RELATIONSHIPS

Strengthen relationships with tourism industry partners across the state to maximize resources and optimize outcomes.

STRATEGY:

Identify opportunities to collaborate on promotions and external communications, expanding access to new and unique audiences.

TACTICS:

- Establish or strengthen relationships through regular check-ins, meetings, and channels of communication
- Align pitching efforts with key activities and programs within tourism industry subsectors
- Identify opportunities to participate in/co-present at key industry events
- Synchronize pitching endeavors with pivotal events and programs within distinct tourism industry segments

GOAL 4: SECURE AND ELEVATE STATE ACCOLADES

Actively pursue, secure, and showcase the state's exceptional achievements and recognitions relevant to tourism.

STRATEGY:

Identify and amplify tourism-related awards, accolades, and rankings that align with the state's unique strengths and attractions.

TACTICS:

- **Accolade Recognition Framework:** Develop a structured approach for identifying, evaluating, and prioritizing accolades received by the state
- **Tailored Storytelling:** Craft compelling narratives that contextualize each accolade within the broader tourism landscape of the state. Highlight the unique attributes and experiences that contributed to earning the recognition, emphasizing the factors that set the destination apart.
- **Multiplatform Amplification:** Share the accolades across a diverse range of media platforms



PROGRAM OF WORK: FY23-24

JULY 2023:

- **Ongoing:** Summer Highlights
- Fall/Foliage Preview
- Summer Bucket List
- **THEME:** Music (Festivals)
- **THEME:** Culinary | Oysters

AUGUST 2023:

- **Ongoing:** Fall/Foliage Preview
- **Ongoing:** Culinary | Oysters
- Fall Bucket List
- **THEME:** Theater
- **THEME:** Nightlife
- **THEME:** LGBTQ+ September
- **THEME:** Sustainability and Culinary | Seed/Sea/
Farm to Table

SEPTEMBER 2023:

- **Ongoing:** Fall/Foliage Highlights
- **Ongoing:** Theater
- **Ongoing:** Sustainability and Culinary | Seed/Sea
Farm to Table
- **Ongoing:** USA Today 10Best Awards | New
categories launched every Monday at noon, ends on
the 28th day at noon, and winners are announced
the following Friday
- Winter Preview
- Best Places to Visit Preview for 2024
(Travel + Leisure, AFAR, NYT, Conde Nast Traveler)
- Fall Bucket List
- Sustainability EV Road Trip
- The Big E—Connecticut Building
- **THEME:** Arts and Culture (Museums/Exhibits)
- **THEME:** Multicultural and Heritage
(Hispanic Heritage Month)
- **THEME:** Culinary | Oysters ongoing | Fall wineries,
craft beers

OCTOBER 2023:

- **Ongoing:** Fall/Foliage Highlights
- **Ongoing:** Winter Preview
- **Ongoing:** Sustainability EV Road Trip

- **Ongoing:** USA Today 10Best Awards | New
categories launched every Monday at noon, ends on
the 28th day at noon, and winners are announced
the following Friday
- Holiday Preview
- Travel + Leisure World's Best Awards Campaign |
Runs October - February | Announced July
- **THEME:** Multicultural and Heritage
(Hispanic Heritage Month)
- **THEME:** Arts and Culture (Theater)

NOVEMBER 2023:

- **Ongoing:** Holiday Preview
- **Ongoing:** Winter Preview
- **Ongoing:** USA Today 10Best Awards | New
categories launched every Monday at noon, ends on
the 28th day at noon, and winners are announced
the following Friday
- Oyster Rollout Preview
- Valentine's Romantic Getaways
- **THEME:** Theater
- **THEME:** Multicultural

DECEMBER 2023:

- **Ongoing:** Holiday Highlights
- **Ongoing:** Valentine's Romantic Getaways
- **Ongoing:** USA Today 10Best Awards | New
categories launched every Monday at noon, ends on
the 28th day at noon, and winners are announced
the following Friday
- Spring 2024 Preview
- Black History Month Preview
- President's Weekend Getaways
- Oyster Rollout Preview
- **THEME:** Outdoor Winter Adventures

JANUARY 2024:

- **Ongoing:** Winter Highlights
- **Ongoing:** Spring Preview/Highlights
- **Ongoing:** Valentine's Romantic Getaways
- **Ongoing:** President's Day Weekend Getaways
- **Ongoing:** Black History Month Preview
- **Ongoing:** Outdoor Winter Adventures

- **Ongoing:** USA Today 10Best Awards | New categories launched every Monday at noon, ends on the 28th day at noon, and winners are announced the following Friday
- Oyster Rollout Event
- **THEME:** Meetings, Conventions, and Sports (March Madness, NCAA Hockey)
- **THEME:** Sustainability
- **THEME:** Culinary | Spring Seed/Sea/Farm to table

FEBRUARY 2024:

- **Ongoing:** Winter Highlights
- **Ongoing:** Spring Preview
- **Ongoing:** Oyster Doc rollout
- **Ongoing:** Meetings, Conventions, and Sports
- **Ongoing:** USA Today 10Best Awards | New categories launched every Monday at noon, ends on the 28th day at noon, and winners are announced the following Friday
- Travel Awaits Best of Travel Awards | Nominations open mid-February – voting begins in April
- **THEME:** Culinary
- **THEME:** Multicultural and Heritage (Black History Month)
- **THEME:** Theater
- **THEME:** Sustainability | Earth Day Preview

MARCH 2024:

- **Ongoing:** Spring Highlights
- **Ongoing:** Meetings, Conventions, and Sports | Getaway Packages
- **Ongoing:** Sustainability | Earth Day Preview
- **Ongoing:** USA Today 10Best Awards | New categories launched every Monday at noon, ends on the 28th day at noon, and winners are announced the following Friday
- Summer 2024 Preview
- June LGBTQ+ Preview
- James Beard Award nominees announced end of March
- **THEME:** Arts and Culture (TBD)
- **THEME:** Sustainability EV Road Trip

APRIL 2024:

- **Ongoing:** Summer Preview
- **Ongoing:** Sustainability | Earth Day Preview
- **Ongoing:** Sustainability EV Road Trip
- **Ongoing:** June LGBTQ+ Preview
- **Ongoing:** USA Today 10 Best Awards | New categories launched every Monday at noon, ends on the 28th day at noon, and winners are announced the following Friday
- Travel Awaits Best of Travel Awards – voting begins April – ends in May
- Conde Nast Traveler Reader's Choice Awards | opens April 1 | Announced in October
- **THEME:** Outdoor Adventure

MAY 2024:

- **Ongoing:** Summer Highlights
- **Ongoing:** Oyster Doc
- **Ongoing:** June LGBTQ+ Preview
- **Ongoing:** USA Today 10Best Awards | New categories launched every Monday at noon, ends on the 28th day at noon, and winners are announced the following Friday
- Hemispheres (United Mag) Reader's Choice Awards | Opens late May, closes mid-August
- **THEME:** Multicultural and Heritage (TBD)
- **THEME:** Culinary | Oysters

JUNE 2024:

- **Ongoing:** Summer Highlights
- **Ongoing:** Oyster doc
- **Ongoing:** USA Today 10Best Awards | New categories launched every Monday at noon, ends on the 28th day at noon, and winners are announced the following Friday
- Connecticut Open House Day
- **THEME:** LGBTQ+ (Pride)
- **THEME:** Culinary | Oysters

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Office of Tourism manages a robust social media program with ongoing support of many platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok.

The continuous, year-round social media posting calendar includes support of marketing campaigns, PR hits, partner and industry news, and other relevant industry content and connection.

GOAL: INSPIRE INTEREST IN VISITING

Inspire interest in visiting Connecticut and drive visitation of both CTvisit.com and the state, while supporting the new brand position and personality.

STRATEGY 1:

Spotlight Connecticut's attractions with energetic, contemporary images to continue to shift the perception of the state from stodgy to vibrant.

TACTICS:

- Utilize a strong mix of UGC photography across all marketing materials
- Invite followers to share their images with us for a chance to be featured

STRATEGY 2:

Drive traffic to CTvisit.com using test and learn strategy to determine most compelling and efficient post content.

TACTICS:

- Post prompts for a mix of top-performing content and new content, all driving to CTvisit.com
- Share appropriate partner news
- Create posts in support of marketing campaigns
- Create posts touting unexpected and exciting experiences
- Identify new ad formats on the top social platforms for testing
- Develop topic-specific newsletter sign-up for increased engagement, retargeting, and look-alike audiences
- Develop topic-specific newsletter sign-up for increased engagement, retargeting, and look-alike audiences
- Test out new markets, specifically fly-in markets, to drive visitation

PROGRAM OF WORK: FY23-24

ONGOING/ALWAYS ON

- Fall campaigns 2023
- Winter campaigns 2023/2024
- Spring/summer campaigns 2024





CONTENT AND WEBSITE

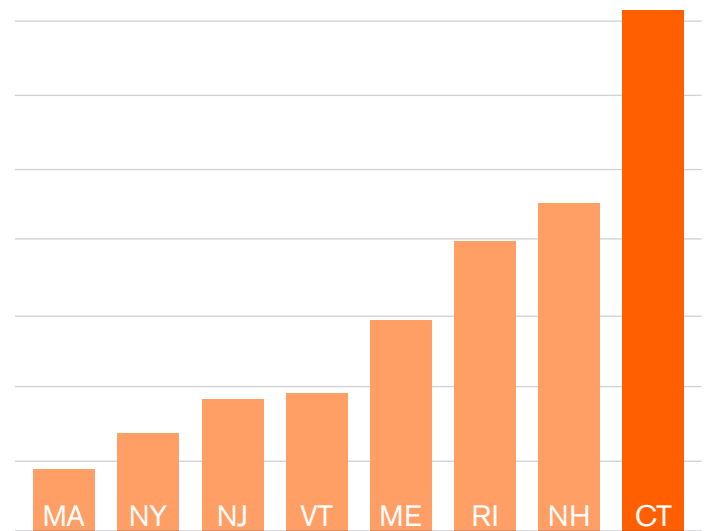
The Office of Tourism administers CTvisit.com and manages all aspects of every form of content on the site, including:

- Ensuring site content integrity by upholding guidelines for all listings and content
- Encouraging partner participation in the creation of listings, events, and deals
- Continually updating the article content on the site, including over 600 unique content stories
- Managing new content development, tagging, and publishing
- Promoting top-performing, most relevant content in a variety of key locations on the site
- Preparing the site to reflect seasonal shifts
- Compiling “This Weekend” highlights every week of the year, the single most visited page of the site

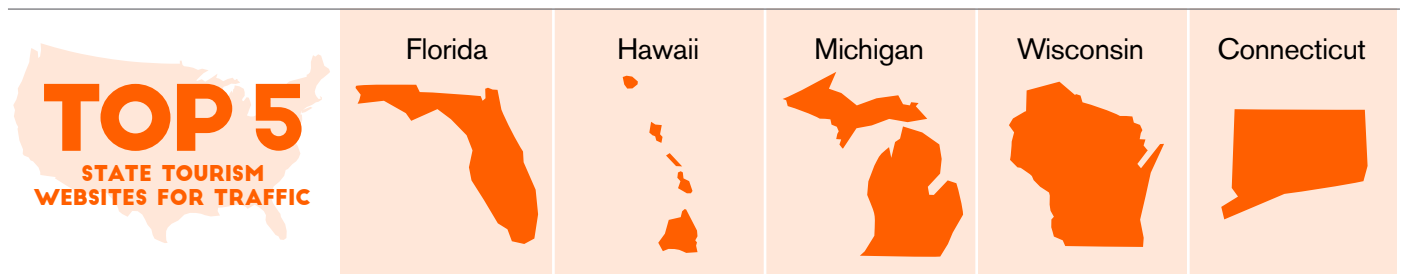
CTvisit.com is the hub of Connecticut Tourism’s marketing communications. The site received 7.1 million visits in 2022 and is trending closer to 8 million for 2024, significantly more than any other state in the region.

According to third-party tracking site SEMrush, with among the smallest budgets and the smallest budget per capita, in summer 2022, Connecticut dwarfed even our largest regional state tourism competitors.

In fact, the same study shows that Connecticut ranks in the top 5 state tourism websites for traffic and top 10 for engagement. Connecticut is punching well above our weight against even large, well-funded states known for tourism.



CT SITE VISITS TRENDING ~8M FOR 2024



CTVISIT.COM UPDATES

In 2022, we launched a major redesign of CTvisit.com that:

- Dramatically changed the look/feel to be in keeping with the new CTvisit.com brand: more vibrant, exciting, diverse, and inclusive
- Offers the visitor many themed channels to help them navigate to the content of their choice, including Arts, Outdoors, Adrenaline, Family Fun, Wellness, Gaming, Culinary, LGBTQ+, Theater, and Nightlife, among many other categories

The recent redesign also:

- Gave more prominence to meetings by placing them in the main nav
- Separated the state into eight regions instead of five, now designated as:
 - Litchfield Hills
 - Naugatuck Valley
 - Fairfield County
 - Greater New Haven
 - River Valley/Greater Hartford
 - Scenic Northeast
 - Greater New London/Norwich
 - Mystic Country
- Added many new itineraries and a spotlight for them on the homepage
- Elevated key focus to This Weekend events on the homepage

These changes have been a contributor to the increasing momentum of CTvisit.com usage.

Now, for FY24, we are working on another significant revision of the site that will accomplish the following goals:

GOAL I: STAY ON TOP

Improve upon what's working, creating a next-level site to provide consumers and listing partners a better, more inspiring experience that maintains our lead among all other state tourism sites in the region and nation.

STRATEGY I:

Update the CMS platform to Drupal10.

TACTICS:

This major rebuilding of the site's CMS foundation, originally Drupal7, has been underway for a while and is set to launch in late November 2023. This platform update will enable:

- Faster page load speeds
- Improved mobile experience
- Modernized admin interface
- Stronger security
- Advanced media handling for video and imagery
- Open architecture for smoother future upgrades

STRATEGY 2:

Greatly improve the usage of article content.

TACTICS:

Without a doubt, the secret sauce that makes CTvisit.com perform so significantly above its competitive set is the article content. This content, particularly the over 600 articles, is a highly efficient traffic and visitation driving tactic in our paid media marketing. But it is also the magnet that draws extraordinary volume of organic traffic via search engines.

- When the site was first designed in 2015, we had not yet discovered this potential with content, so the design did not optimize for it. With this new launch, the content will have much higher prominence and be cross sold strategically throughout the site.
- The new site design will also enable a data-driven way of delivering on the user experience so that much of the core content will not require curated updates, which will save cost and increase the number of partners featured on key topics.

STRATEGY 3:

Enhance user experience/features.

TACTICS:

With the major rebuild of the CMS, the following enhancements will launch at the same time:

- Enhanced search experience, including geo-location
- Expanded experience for cities/towns
- New itineraries home
- Connected media/press room

GOAL 2: DRIVE INDUSTRY LEADS

Provide more leads to industry businesses. In 2022, CTvisit.com generated well over 3 million leads in the form of clicks, calls, emails, and ticket booking engine traffic to tourism industry businesses.

STRATEGY:

Increase the number of partners featured along key themes and content topics, inspiring more leads.

TACTICS:

- As we have discovered from data, as it relates to CTvisit.com, more is more. So we will continue to update article content with more businesses, but the biggest change will come from the inclusions along key themed channels.
- Once the new version of the site launches in November 2023, the themed channels from the homepage and from the main nav will lead to landing pages that are designed more like the successful content articles, but each category will include all the listings relevant to that theme, organized by subcategories
- These landing pages will then serve as “articles” and will feed into our content marketing “machine.” Given the success of the promoted content, this should greatly increase exposure and leads for many listings.

PROGRAM OF WORK: FY23-24

JULY-NOVEMBER 2023

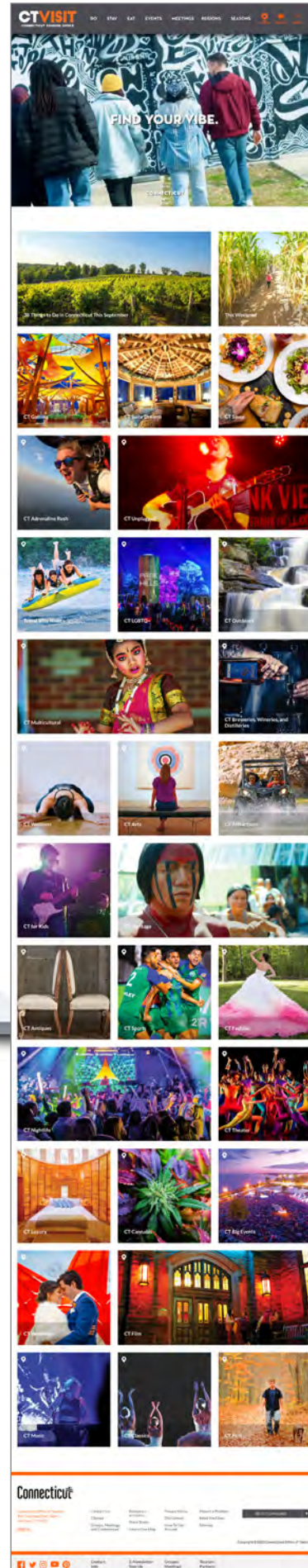
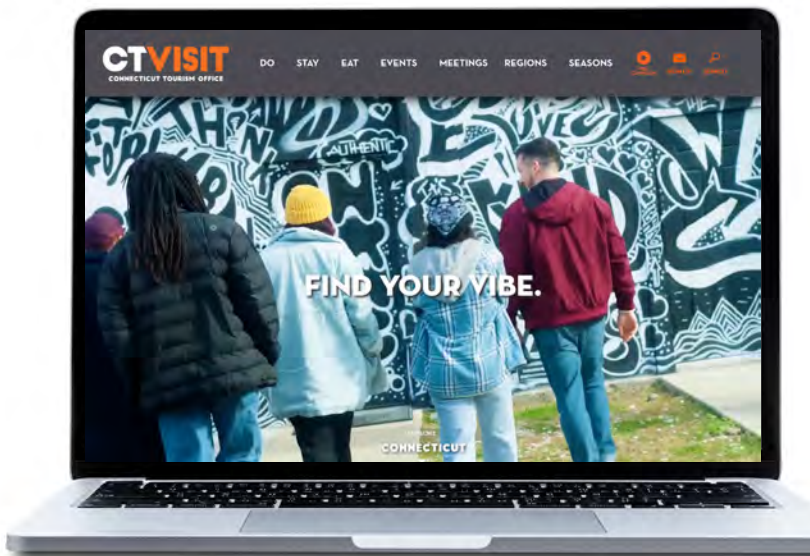
- Continuously update all content on CTvisit.com
- Finalize and test Drupal 10 version of the site

NOVEMBER 2023

- Launch the new Drupal 10 site

JANUARY-JUNE 2024

- Create new CMS instruction documentation for easy distribution/training to industry partners
- Offer training and assistance as needed





SPECIAL THEMES

Connecticut's strength as a tourism destination lies in the fact that we have such a diverse array of leisure and recreational activities packed into a small area no more than two hours across. So, visitors can have multidimensional experiences in the same day with little travel between.

The overarching strategy is to promote this full range, including:

SCENIC OUTDOORS



FAMILY FUN



CULINARY



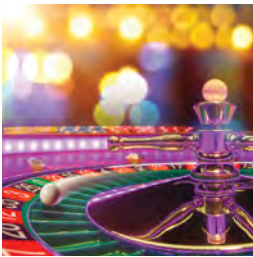
ARTS/CULTURE



HISTORY



GAMING



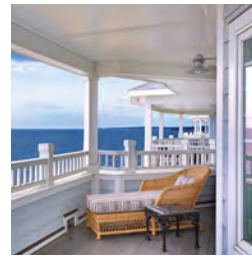
ADRENALINE



SPORTS



ACCOMMODATIONS



WELLNESS



SHOPPING



LGBTQ+



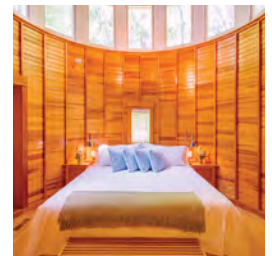
MULTICULTURAL



NIGHTLIFE



LUXURY



INNOVATION



UNIQUE EXPERIENCES



But while we promote this full range of what makes Connecticut special, in FY24, there are a few areas of special focus that we will be investing extra energy into.

GOAL 1: IMPROVE BALANCE IN THE MIX

When we first launched the new CTvisit brand, we sought to positively shift Connecticut's reputation from stodgy and boring to vibrant, youthful, and energetic. With that goal at the forefront, there were a few categories that got less attention in the mix. We believe marketing efforts can now support the broader range of the Connecticut story.

STRATEGY:

Depict the full range of Connecticut's offering.

TACTIC:

Increase the presence in messaging of offerings that may be less edgy, but that are true to the identity of the state. Show them in a contemporary way. Areas that will become a greater part of the message include:

FAMILY FUN



HISTORY



CHARMING TOWNS AND ARCHITECTURE



ICONIC ATTRACTIONS



GOAL 2: BUILD ACCLAIM FOR SPECIFIC OFFERINGS THAT HAVE BURGEONING MOMENTUM

Multiple sectors of Connecticut tourism are earning acclaim on the worldwide stage. We want to accelerate that natural momentum by building brand position and broad awareness of Connecticut's excellence in these areas. This effort begins this year but will be reinforced and built over many years.

STRATEGY I:

Become a mecca for oysters.

TACTICS:

- Create a catchy name/theme line around Connecticut's oyster excellence and reinforce it via all marketing communication touchpoints. Examples to explain the idea, but that may not be the actual line used:
 - In Connecticut, the oyster is our world.
 - This state is your oyster.
 - Oyster State of Mind
- Round up oyster experts, oyster rating organizations, and Connecticut's oyster farmers and restaurants, and create stories to promote via paid, earned, and owned promotion. Initiatives will include a documentary, a press event, PR pitches, content pieces on CTvisit.com, and paid media.

STRATEGY 2:

Promote Connecticut as an innovative, creative, and important fountainhead and hot spot for theater, supporting revenues for this sector that is experiencing a longer recovery after COVID.

TACTICS:

- Create a name/theme line that denotes the entire theater scene in Connecticut, from our producing to our presenting theaters, honoring our historic venues and innovative, excellent, and diverse offerings
 - Promote the entire theater scene by using this theme line and supporting messages in all paid, earned, and owned media for years to come
 - While promoting the entire theater scene by theme line across all paid, earned, and owned efforts, give many specific examples of currently offered experiences and quick links to the ticketing agents.
-

STRATEGY 3:

Amplify awareness of Connecticut being named the #1 state in the U.S. for hiking.

TACTIC:

- Use the phrase “ranked as the #1 state for hiking” or similar any time the subject of hiking or similar outdoor attraction is mentioned in all forms of paid, earned, and owned media
Note: The entity that conducted the study and created an index rating the hiking of all 50 states, Why This Place, is not broadly known, but the news has been picked up and reported by many well-known outlets
-

STRATEGY 4:

Continue building the momentum of New Haven as the home of the best pizza in America.

TACTIC:

- Three different restaurants in New Haven have recently earned the “#1 pizza in America” accolade from three different reviewing sources. We will amplify the idea that they are all in New Haven and promote the whole state as a top pizza destination.
-

STRATEGY 5:

Highlight Connecticut’s green/sustainable offerings, a theme that is trending significantly in tourism.

TACTIC:

- Gather examples of our green/sustainable tourism offerings and promote the concept and specifics using paid, earned, and owned media

GOAL 3: BUILD ACCLAIM AND STATE PRIDE

Connecticut is a state of excellence in so many ways, but much of it is not as well known as we would like. We want to build the state's reputation for the excellence of our tourism offerings in the minds of both potential visitors and residents.

STRATEGY:

Broadly promote the many "top state" rankings that Connecticut receives in tourism-relevant categories from third-party rating organizations.

TACTICS:

Connecticut is rated as a top state in so many different categories. When one sees the collection of accolades, it is quite impressive. So we will gather these ratings and rankings from third parties and use our paid, earned, and owned media platforms to build more awareness of each alone as well as the gestalt. Here are a few recent examples:

- New Haven was named one of the top places to go in 2023 by **New York Times 52 Places to Go**
- Mystic was named the #4 best summer travel destination the U.S. in **USA Today's 10Best list**
- Bradley International Airport was named the #2 "Best Airport in the U.S." in **Conde Nast Traveler's Readers' Choice Awards** in 2022 and is again nominated for this accolade in 2023 — voting is ongoing through June
- Home of the pizza voted #1 in America, and in fact, two different pizza restaurants have been recently named as #1 by two different rating organizations — both on the same block in New Haven:
 - Frank Pepe by the Daily Meal, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 (no known ratings beyond 2020)
 - Modern Apizza by Pizza Today, 2023

The New York Times
52 PLACES TO GO

10 USA TODAY
10Best



FRANK PEPE



MODERN APIZZA



PROGRAM OF WORK: FY23-24

JULY-DECEMBER 2023

- Create Find Your Vibe campaign assets that include all themes, including new themes of focus
- Develop theme lines for oyster and theater pushes
- Gather expert and industry support and messaging input for oyster and theater story angles
- Promote hiking and pizza acclaim in all communications touchpoints
- Promote special themes in all paid, earned, and owned media

JANUARY-MARCH 2024

- Launch the oyster documentary
- Host an oyster-focused press event

APRIL-JUNE 2024

- Promote all themes, including themes of special focus, in the spring/summer '24 campaign





ANALYTICS AND RESEARCH

The Connecticut Office of Tourism tracks many sources of data and manages proprietary research to help inform the programs and strategies and to help keep the industry informed. These sources include, but are not limited to:

- **Economic Impact** study for Connecticut from Tourism Economics, Inc. This valuable study was conducted in FY23 after a hiatus during the pandemic. We will continue this annual study in FY24.
- **Smith Travel Research** reports, monthly
- AlltheRooms monthly reports on Airbnb and VRBO lodging data
- **Google Analytics** of CTvisit for traffic, media tactic performance, and consumer behavioral and interest insights, as well as leads to partner organizations
- An annual **Brand Attitudes and Awareness** study. FY24 will mark its 12th year.
- Third-party studies that COT can acquire

And this year, we have begun a three-year engagement with **Arrivalist** to provide paid media ROI and other offline visitation behavior attributable to marketing.

ECONOMIC IMPACT:

We were pleased to resume this annual study with Tourism Economics in FY23 after a several-year hiatus due to the pandemic. The following information is from the most recent study from calendar year 2022, and we look forward to continuing to access and report these key metrics throughout FY24.

Although many residents of Connecticut may not think of their state as a tourist destination, tourism is big business.

In fact, Connecticut's tourism industry is larger than Maine's — the state whose nickname is "Vacationland."



\$17 billion in economic impact supported by traveler spending¹
(including over \$10B in direct visitor spending and almost \$7B in indirect impacts)



\$1.1B in state and local taxes¹



\$1.3 billion in lodging revenue²
(including traditional lodging and short-term rentals like Airbnb. Not including casino data.)

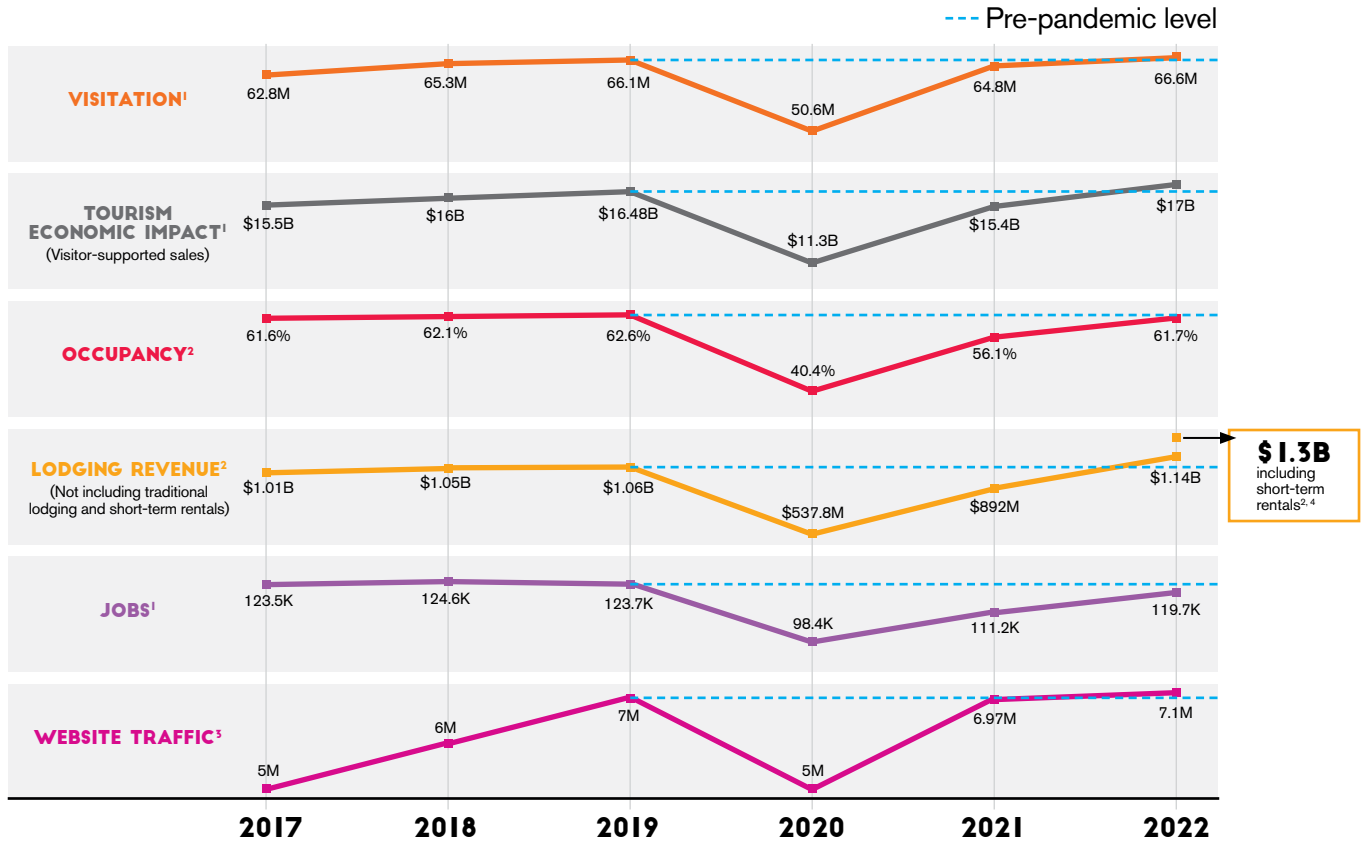


120,00 jobs supported by visitor spending¹

Sources: ¹2022 estimate reported in *Tourism Economics 2022* study; ²STR, 2017-2022; ³Google Analytics

The Tourism Economics report also provides us visitation numbers, which the Office of Tourism has not been able to report in many years.

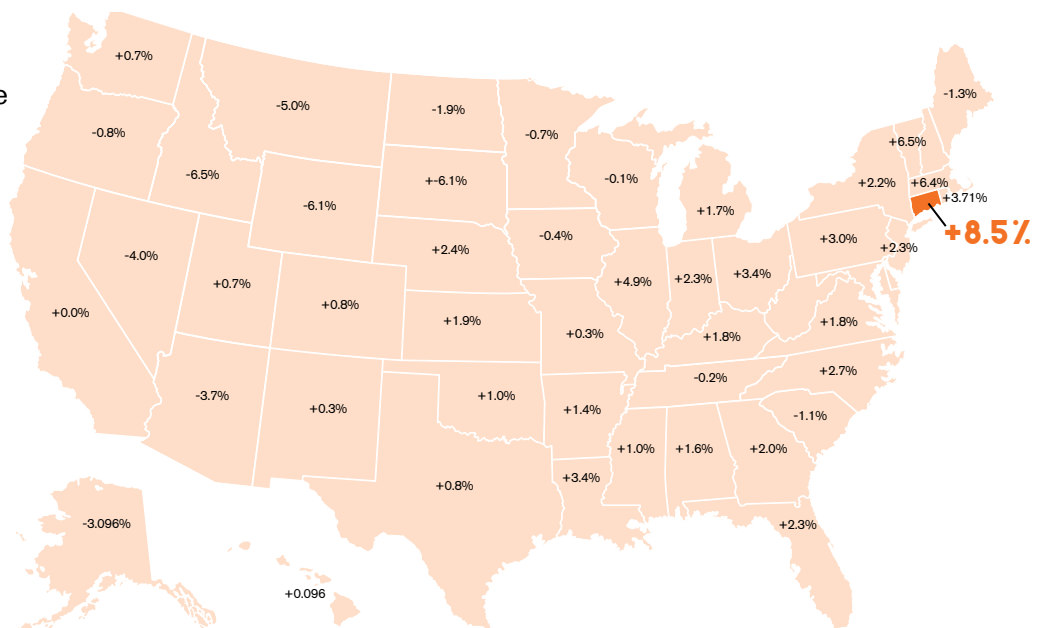
The data we are now able to see from Tourism Economics, Smith Travel Research, AlltheRooms, and Google Analytics show that the tourism industry has rebounded to at or above pre-pandemic levels as of the end of 2022, thanks in large part to recovery funding.



In fact, from Arrivalist's national Travel Index, we know that Connecticut leads the nation in rate of recovery.

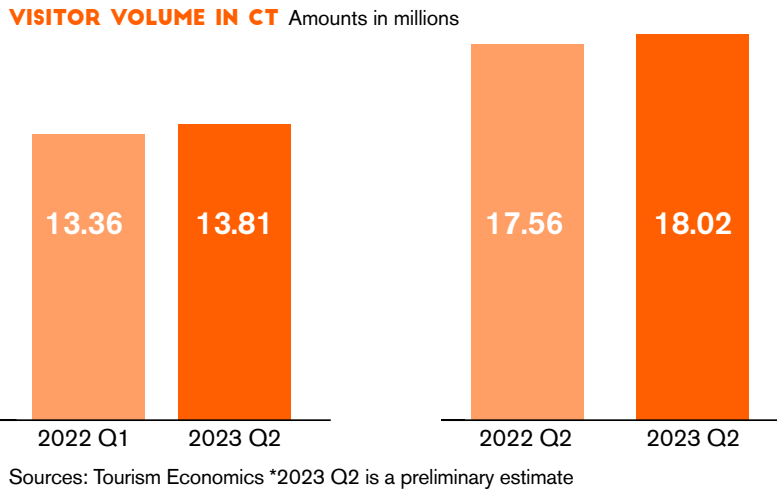
Connecticut is the #1 state in the nation in growth rate of drive market overnight travel compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Source: Arrivalist Travel Index, January-December, 2022



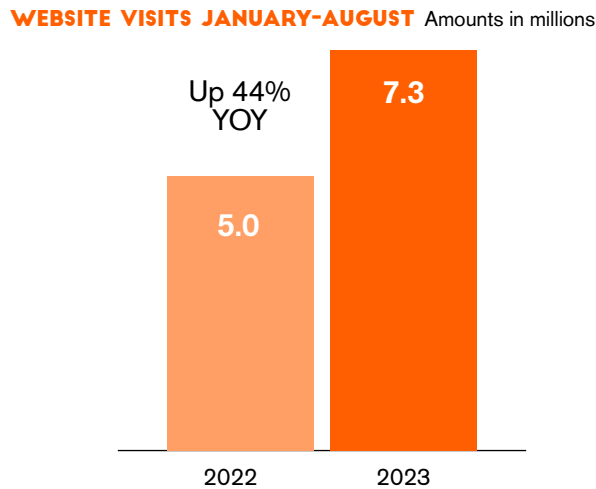
Sources: ¹2022 estimate reported in *Tourism Economics 2022* study; ²STR, 2017-2022; ³Google Analytics; ⁴AlltheRooms, 2022

And as we began calendar year 2023, we can see from Tourism Economics visitation data that 2022's momentum is continuing: Connecticut welcomed 31.8 million visitors in the first half of 2023 — a 2.9% increase year-to-date compared to 2022.



INSIGHTS FROM GOOGLE ANALYTICS FOR CTVISIT.COM

Further evidence of continuing momentum for Connecticut's tourism industry is indicated in the Google Analytics data from CTvisit.com.



12TH ANNUAL BRAND ATTITUDES AND AWARENESS STUDY

Each year for the last 11 years, COT has been conducting a Brand Attitudes and Awareness study. The study uses a consistent survey of consumers in the Northeast to track the long-term changes in attitudes and awareness and the impact that marketing has on them.

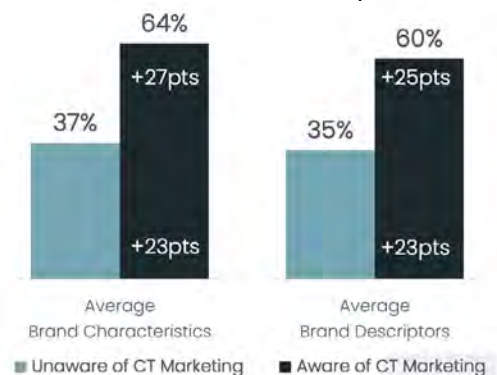
- Visitors in 2022 had a comparatively high household income and were older but visited just as often as in the prior year
- Those who visited in 2022 were somewhat more ethnically diverse than those prior years
- Similar trends have been noted across travelers nationwide
- And in 2022, for the first time, we specifically surveyed consumers who identified as LGBTQ+ to see how our marketing messages, which make a concerted effort to integrate this audience, are being received by them

Category	2022 Visitors	2021 Visitors	2020 Visitors	2022 LGBTQ+ Visitors
Household Income	\$142.8k	\$133.3k	\$137.4k	\$140.3k
Age of Travel Respondent	42.5	41.0	47.7	40.2
25-34	22%	32%	15%	21%
35-44	38%	33%	50%	68%
45-64	40%	35%	36%	11%
Interest in Visiting Next 2 Years	61%	70%	72%	85%
Intent to Visit Next 12 Months	74%	78%	87%	91%
Number of Visits Past 5 Years	4.1	4.1	6.8	6.8
White, Non-Hispanic*	81%	84%	87%	93%
Black, Non-Hispanic	5.9%	2.6%	3.4%	6%
Hispanic	8.5%	7.9%	4.1%	6%
Asian	5.1%	7.2%	4.7%	2%
Other	3.0%	2.0%	4.1%	2%

Note: Sum of races/ethnicities totals to >100% because some respondents fall into multiple categories.

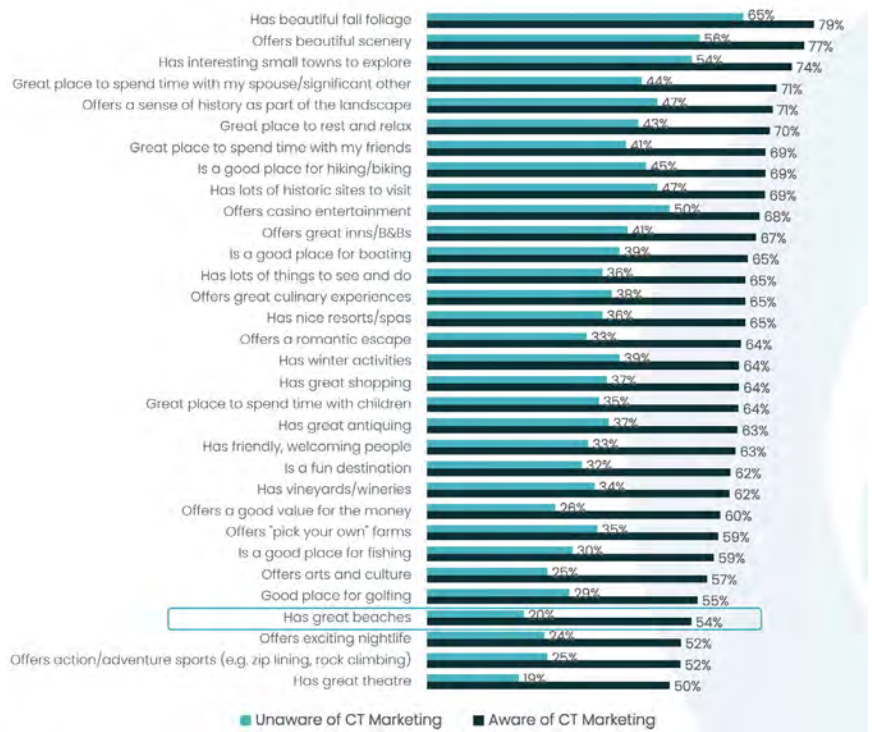
CONNECTICUT BRAND RATINGS

- Connecticut ratings among its brand characteristics and brand descriptors all improved over last year's results. Likewise, the state's marketing efforts delivered increases across all metrics and continued to have a positive impact on Connecticut's brand perceptions.
- In 2022, those reached by Connecticut's Find Your Vibe marketing campaign had a significantly higher lift in perceptions of the state than those who didn't see marketing. The lift in 2022 increased over 2021 and remained much higher across all brand measurements than Connecticut has typically seen.
- The lift for the LGBTQ+ population mirrored that for overall respondents



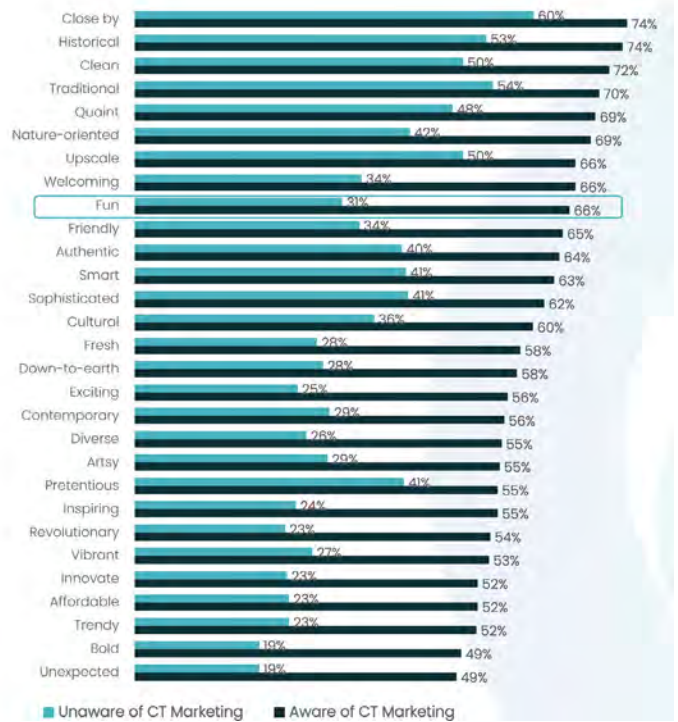
BRAND CHARACTERISTICS

- Connecticut's marketing continues to have a significant impact on how travelers view the state.
- Those who are aware of the marketing rate the state an average of 27 points higher than those who did not see any of the marketing
- The biggest variance this year comes in the perception of Connecticut as a place that offers great beaches (+34 points)



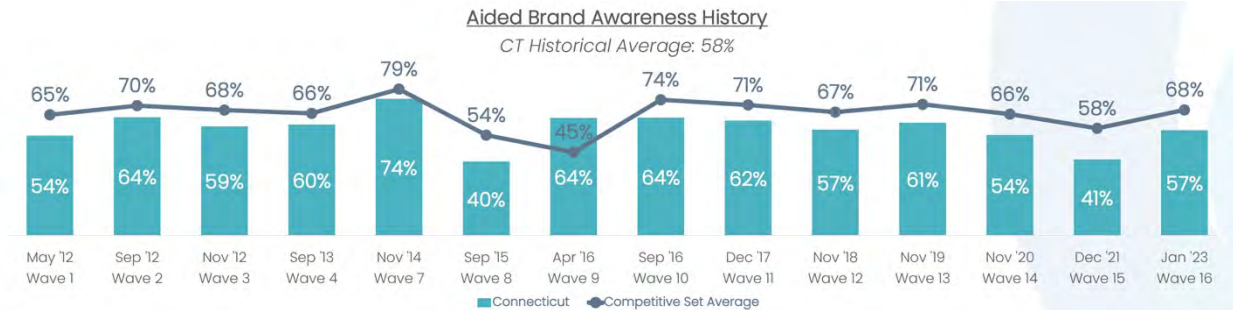
BRAND DESCRIPTORS

- Connecticut's marketing also has a significant impact on how travelers describe Connecticut
- The brand descriptors average 60% for those aware of Connecticut's marketing, while the average among those unaware is only 35%
- Those unaware of the marketing are far less likely to view Connecticut as being a fun destination to visit (-35 points) compared to those marketing aware, marking the biggest difference in opinion between the two segments of travelers



AIDED BRAND AWARENESS

- Nearly 6 in 10 travelers in New England age 25-64 this year were familiar with Connecticut as a place to visit or travel to
- And Connecticut's aided brand awareness rebounded well, up 16 points compared to 2021. On average, competitive states experienced a similar phenomenon, as average brand awareness across the competitive set also rebounded by an impressive 10 points in awareness compared to 2021



INTEREST AND INTENT TO VISIT CONNECTICUT

- Connecticut's marketing efforts not only impacted traveler perceptions of the state as a travel destination but have also increased both interest and intent to visit Connecticut in the next 12 months
- In 2022, travelers reached by Connecticut's marketing efforts indicated they were 30 points more interested in visiting than those who hadn't seen any of the state's marketing efforts. Similarly, those who had seen the marketing were also 31 points more likely visit Connecticut in the next 12 months.





VISITOR CONCIERGE SERVICES

The Office of Tourism directly connects live with consumers, serving to assist them one on one in discovering things to do, places to stay, and places to eat.

GOAL: OPTIMIZE STATE'S CONCIERGE SERVICES

Ensure every touchpoint with potential visitors provides a welcoming, positive experience.

STRATEGY:

Improve Welcome Centers

TACTICS:

- Exhibit at the Big E, supported by volunteers.
 - We are excited to provide one-to-one assistance, via a host of volunteers, at the CTvisit booth in the center of the Connecticut Building at the Big E. Next year, we look forward to launching updated CTvisit brand graphics in appropriate locations throughout the Connecticut Building
- Improve the Welcome Center Experience
 - Connecticut's Welcome Centers have been open through the busy summer 2023 season, staffed by COT's trained seasonal employees, who have been directing visitors to points of interest throughout the state
 - A pilot program has revitalized two Welcome Centers to date — Danbury and Darien — with fresh new branding, 43" television screens showing the Find Your Vibe sizzle reel, and touch screen kiosks offering plenty of information on things to do, places to eat, and places to stay. Following the summer season, COT and DOT will be assessing the pilot and exploring the feasibility of similar renovations in four more Welcome Centers across the state.





INDUSTRY OUTREACH

The Connecticut Office of Tourism, in collaboration with our Regional Tourism partners, seeks to connect with industry businesses and stakeholders throughout the state and help unite the messages and advance the collective needs of all constituents.

GOAL 1: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH MORE TOURISM INDUSTRY BUSINESSES

We can only promote what we know about, so we will make organized efforts to gather input from our industry stakeholders.

STRATEGY:

Gather insights from all corners of the industry to determine common themes and needs from constituents.

TACTICS:

- Conduct biannual “listening tours” with stops in all areas of the state. Invite all industry stakeholders in each area to discuss how their businesses are doing, what their pain points are currently, and in what ways the Office of Tourism can assist. Use these insights to inform marketing initiatives and messaging to best serve the industry.
- Actively participate in Connecticut Association meetings, including Connecticut Restaurants, Connecticut Lodging, Connecticut Merchants, Connecticut Attractions, Connecticut Farm Wineries, COGS, Connecticut Chambers of Commerce, Connecticut Art and Cultural Alliances, etc
- Request input on new offerings via seasonal outreach emails

GOAL 2: UNIFY AND EDUCATE THE CONNECTICUT TOURISM INDUSTRY

With all constituents moving together in the same direction, the entire industry will benefit.

STRATEGY:

Host an annual event that seeks to provide information, education, and opportunities that unify the direction of the constituents.

TACTICS:

- Host an annual Tourism Conference in the early spring that:
 - Provides awareness of the Office of Tourism’s programs and offers ways for constituents to engage in support of the campaigns, and of pathways to be featured in the campaigns
 - Presents insights on the industry and current trends and best practices
 - Offers education on specific marketing tactics and best practices for maximizing their effectiveness at every budget level



GLOBAL TRAVEL INDUSTRY SALES

Connecticut Office of Tourism (COT) Leisure Sales provides travel industry professionals access to the resources they need for planning, marketing, and selling the state as a leisure group and FIT destination.

The division oversees all targeted sales efforts to key domestic and international travel industry professionals, including tour operators, travel consultants, online travel agencies (OTAs), receptive service operators, and international sales representatives.

COT will develop sales missions, attend consumer and travel trade shows, and organize FAMILIARIZATION tours to connect buyers with COT suppliers to foster business relationships and increase revenue for stakeholders and the State of Connecticut.

In support of the Aer Lingus Dublin/Hartford flight, COT partners with Discover New England, the official destination marketing organization charged with the promotion of the New England brand to distant domestic and international markets. The DNE partnership enables the COT sales representative to develop working relationships with the travel trade through our participation in the organization's sales and marketing initiatives.

The COT, in partnership with the regional tourism districts, will implement training sessions to educate stakeholders regarding the needs of the buyers and the visitors, which will increase supplier engagement, product for travel trade agencies/operators, and ultimately, visitation.

GOAL: SUPPORT DIRECT SALES

Increase the volume and revenue of leisure travel.

STRATEGY I

Establish relationships with the regional tourism district BOD and their stakeholders as a leader and resource in the leisure travel market to increase their participation in the leisure markets.

TACTICS

- Present workshops/training sessions for stakeholders to show value in the market as well as to share market research and best practice guidelines
- Engage stakeholders in the selection process of sales initiatives and targeted feeder markets
- Encourage participation of stakeholders in COT sales and marketing initiatives to increase their visibility in the market

STRATEGY 2

Increase awareness of Connecticut as a leisure destination to the drive, group tour, and international market segments to increase visitation.

TACTICS

- Attend trade shows in partnership with Discover New England (DNE) to build the Connecticut brand within the region and develop relationships with tour operators/product managers
- Increase Connecticut's presence in key tour operator/agencies' marketing materials
- Provide travel industry professionals with easy access to the resources needed for planning, marketing, and selling Connecticut
- Develop sales missions, attend consumer and travel trade shows, and organize familiarization tours to connect clients with stakeholders and to increase awareness of Connecticut's tourism/hospitality product
- Expand travel advisor education through virtual training workshops
- Continue relationships with key Aer Lingus representatives and Bradley International Airport to support the return and successful operation of the Aer Lingus Dublin/Bradley flight



PROGRAM OF WORK: FY23-24

JULY 2023

- USA Summer Soiree, Dublin

OCTOBER 2023

- Brand USA Travel Week, London
- ITS, London

NOVEMBER 2023

- DNE German Sales Mission, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich
- German Travel Trade Networking Event, Frankfurt

JANUARY 2024

- American Bus Association Marketplace, Nashville, TN
- American Bus Association Exhibit, Nashville, TN
- Holiday World, Dublin
- ITTA Awards Dinner Sponsor, Dublin
- NY Travel and Adventure LGBTQ Pavilion, New York City, NY

MARCH 2024

- Aer Lingus Road Show, Dublin

APRIL 2024

- DNE FAM, CT

MAY 2024

- IPW, Los Angeles, CA

JUNE 2024

- DNE UK Sales Mission, various locations

JUNE-JULY 2024

- International Media and Travel Trade FAMs



GROUPS/SPORTS TOURISM

The Connecticut Convention & Sports Bureau's (CTMEETINGS) mission is to sell and market the state of Connecticut as a premier destination for national, regional, and statewide group business meetings, conventions, and events.



GOAL 1: INSPIRE DIRECT SALES

Drive more groups and meetings to Connecticut; maximize their impact on the state's economy.

STRATEGY 1

Sell and market Connecticut as a premier destination for national, regional, and statewide group business. CTMEETINGS continues to work with the meetings and events industry, delivers qualified RFPs to venues and suppliers, and selling Connecticut as an affordable, convenient, and accessible destination.

TACTICS

- Gather and report on the impact of attendees at meetings/events (jobs supported, taxes generated, business sales impact)
- Report on the impact of the CTMEETINGS sales and marketing efforts
- Identify and share testimonials of businesses that benefit from group business
- Position CTMEETINGS as the state's experts in the meeting and event industry
- Develop a continually updated database with key CTMEETINGS statistics for event planners, board members, and supporters; invest in sales prospecting tools and resources

STRATEGY 2

Build and further develop relationships with local planners and assist them in hosting events in Connecticut.

TACTICS

- Focus on local corporate and association planners to help them get back to the market
 - Offer attractive promotional pieces, giveaways, and other items for events attendees
-

STRATEGY 3

Reach new planners and educate them on why they should consider Connecticut.

TACTICS

- Develop and enhance online profiles for ConferenceDirect, HelmsBriscoe, CVENT, and others
 - Budget for hosted FAM tours for planners and media
 - Increase CTMEETINGS attendance at industry trade shows and meetings
 - Create an electronic, statewide facilities guide for conventions
 - Increase marketing with online partners
 - Develop a plan to attract new business and retain current business; consider investing in additional third-party partnerships and channels
-

STRATEGY 4

Develop partnerships with community-development-focused agencies and organizations.

TACTICS

- Develop clear and unified messaging in conjunction with the Connecticut Office of Tourism, Regional Tourism Districts, the Connecticut Lodging Association, and the Connecticut Restaurant Association
- Form partnerships with other agencies and organizations, chambers of commerce, Rotary clubs, networking groups, industry associations, colleges, and government entities
- Request reciprocal appearances at board meetings and events to create mutually beneficial relationships with industry partners
- Develop co-op and partnership marketing opportunities



GOAL 2: OPTIMIZE TECHNOLOGY AND E-MARKETING

Increase client visibility and staff effectiveness to market the State of Connecticut as a premier destination for national, regional, and statewide group business.

STRATEGY I

Invest in new technologies, including digital and media assets.

TACTICS

- Conduct a comprehensive audit of the CTMEETINGS website and e-marketing plan; evaluate competitor sites
- Enhance social media visibility and request reciprocal links from partners
- Work with Simpleview to upgrade the extranet and conduct training webinars to ensure complete member involvement and understanding of the sales systems and updates
- Further update and add elements to CTMEETINGS website as a meeting-planner-driven experience for site selection and competitive convention service e-resources, e.g., meeting planner toolkit, media library, microsites
- Work with the Office of Tourism to maximize the CTMEETINGS visibility on CTvisit.com
- Invest in search engine optimization (SEO)
- Enhance e-marketing with geotargeting and other technology opportunities
- Design new unified collateral material, such as multiuse digital brochures
- Expand meeting-related image and video library

STRATEGY 2

Enhance outreach through public events, e-marketing, social media, and public relations.

TACTICS

- Rebuild and restructure social media platforms for engagement and lead generation
- Develop social media calendar to proactively drive website traffic
- Work to engage meeting planners through social media
- Utilize YouTube and other streaming services to tell the CTMEETINGS story and promote it to groups for convention sales and trade shows
- Aggressively communicate CTMEETINGS wins and economic impact through public relations and communications outreach
- Update “thumb drive” information on a continuing basis for use with meeting planners in designated market segments
- Further engage with LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram, building on our award-winning Instagram success with HelmsBriscoe
- Invest in social media channels to act as a sales lead generator
- Expand “Hospitality Heroes” recognition, which recognizes industry-related community service; develop more opportunities to recognize and present awards to local heroes that help CTMEETINGS land major events

GOAL 3: PROMOTE CONVENTION SERVICES

Find new ways to attract new business and returning business.

STRATEGY I

Service the needs of all visiting groups and individuals and provide attendees with a New England experience that exceeds expectations.

TACTICS

- Refine lines of communication and how to share information with planners and meeting venues
 - Further develop timeline for courses of actions
 - Develop volunteer base for events that need this service
 - Prepare and disseminate a convention resume to clients, local restaurants, host hotels, and the meeting venues prior to events
 - Visit events as a courtesy and to provide service to the group whenever necessary
 - Provide blogs and social media feeds before, during, and after events and monitor posts
 - Study social media analytics and prepare post-event survey(s) for planners and attendees as requested
 - Explore ways to enhance the planner and attendee experience through incentives and giveaways
 - Review clients' needs for upcoming events to industry partners
 - Share clients' post-event comments with industry partners
 - Work in partnership with other venues' Convention Services staff to create a true local Connecticut experience
-

STRATEGY 2

Further develop communication to enhance the guest experience.

TACTICS

- Look for opportunities to pre-promote Connecticut to event attendees
- Do media outreach and social media promotion before and during event
- Monitor postings for reviews and comments
- Create microsites for citywide events
- Provide promotional collateral pre-event and at meeting site
- Develop a microsite template for each region of the state that interfaces with planner's conference website and/or mobile apps
- Coordinate site inspection of hotels, off-site venues, and attractions as needed
- Assist in bid process with members when needed
- Develop pre- and post-meeting itineraries for extended stay
- Develop free time and spousal programs
- Assist with off-site venues
- Expand social media presence between event and restaurants and attractions
- Assist with meeting services, such as transportation, temp services, and volunteers

GOAL 4: ADVOCATE FOR CONNECTICUT

Work harmoniously with other organizations involved in state promotion to enable Connecticut and its immediate environment to become a regional, family-oriented, arts, cultural, education, sports, entertainment, and meeting destination that will create new jobs and broaden the tourism effort.

STRATEGY 1

Publicly support projects that will enhance the experience and attractiveness of the destination.

TACTICS

- Work closely with Destination International on best practices
- Identify the areas in which the Connecticut experience could be improved for meeting, sports, and event clients and attendees:
 - Transportation issues to and from Bradley International Airport (BDL) and other regional airports, attractions, and lodging
 - Expanded lodging and meeting/convention inventory throughout the state
 - Tournament-grade sports complexes (indoor and outdoor) throughout the state
- Support downtown restaurant and entertainment districts throughout the state
- Support enhanced transportation initiatives throughout the state
- Champion efforts to increase hotel room inventory and meeting/event space throughout the state, especially in major cities

STRATEGY 2

Enhance relationships with elected officials and community leaders.

TACTICS

- Identify and meet with the most influential leaders in the state
- Coordinate the CTMEETINGS message with other hospitality industry associations
- Provide community leaders with regular reports of the impact of the CTMEETINGS sales and marketing efforts
- Request regular board presentations to the city councils in communities that host CTMEETINGS secured events
- Schedule regular discussions with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and State Legislators to keep them updated on CTMEETINGS successes
- Be an active participant in State Tourism Day
- Meet with future candidates for the state legislature before the elections to inform them of the CTMEETINGS program of work and impact
- Share the rationale behind destination marketing to provide answers for elected officials contending with an uninformed public
- Encourage industry partners to carry the message in their local districts
- Create a partnership with downtown districts in the state's four largest cities, as well as southeastern Connecticut, to develop a hospitality training program for front-desk personnel, salespeople, waitstaff, etc., and include elected officials to address the trainees so they see the impact on employment

In concert with the efforts of the Connecticut Convention & Sports Bureau (CTMEETINGS) to drive more groups and meetings, continue to focus on booking more sports events, and maximize each event's potential to draw many thousands of fans. Also, attract, host, and support regional, national, and international sports events with a focus on economic impact and media exposure.

CTSPORTS

GOAL: INSPIRE DIRECT SALES

Book more sports events of every size at a full range of venues across the state.

STRATEGY I

Sell and market Connecticut as a premier destination for national, regional, and statewide sports events, promoting Connecticut as a safe, convenient, and accessible destination.

TACTICS

- Position the CTMEETINGS as the state's expert in the sports industry
- Offer attractive promotional pieces, giveaways, and other items for events attendees
- Create an electronic, statewide facilities guide for sports
- Increase marketing with online partners
- Develop a plan to attract new business and retain current business
- Enhance social media visibility
- Conduct media outreach and social media promotion before and during events
- Monitor social media postings for reviews and comments



STRATEGY 2

Develop new and strengthen existing relationships with event planners to educate them about what Connecticut has to offer.

TACTICS

- Attend industry trade shows and target events that match the capabilities of Connecticut venues
 - Be active in professional trade organizations to expand contacts
 - Execute sales activities including sales calls, telemarketing, and email correspondence
 - Continue to target third-party planners and trade show companies that can generate new business
 - Schedule sales missions to destinations that are home to event planners
 - Conduct in-person sales calls, presentations, and intimate client events
 - Produce sports e-newsletters and develop virtual FAMs to educate planners on Connecticut's assets
 - Create Connecticut venue listings on event planner websites, such as Play Easy
-

STRATEGY 3

Encourage the development of amateur athletics and sports development throughout the state.

TACTICS:

- Leverage existing facility-related assets and advocate for facilities development
 - Host meetings to learn needs, aspirations, and goals of venue directors and sports organizations.
 - Attend meetings, award dinners, and championship events to build relationships
 - Advocate for venues in development by attending public hearings, collaborating with legislators, and providing referrals to State agencies
 - Advocate to change legislation that hinders expansion of sport. Advocate for funding for sports.
 - Proactively sell Connecticut to the media. Be an accessible and available expert on Connecticut sports.
-

STRATEGY 4

Encourage the development of local esports events at the youth, high school, and collegiate level.

TACTICS:

- Leverage existing facility-related assets and advocate for facilities development
- Host meetings to learn needs, aspirations, and goals of tournament organizers, venues, and industry partners
- Attend meetings, competitions, and championship events to build relationships
- Advocate for venues in development by attending public hearings, collaborating with legislators, and providing referrals to State agencies
- Proactively sell Connecticut to the esports media. Be an accessible and available expert on Connecticut esports.



MEMBERSHIPS

The Connecticut Office of Tourism's administrative office ensures that all the office's operations are carefully budgeted and efficiently managed. In addition, it oversees all the department's regional, national, and international memberships in leading trade associations and industry organizations.

GOAL: RAISE VISIBILITY OF CONNECTICUT

Increase Connecticut's positioning as a world-class destination.

STRATEGY:

Become an active member of key travel/tourism/destination associations.

- Leverage these memberships to network with key travel/tourism influencers and media outlets.
- Capitalize on the learning opportunities offered through these organizations to stay up to date on the latest sales/marketing trends in the tourism industry.

TACTIC:

Maximize the benefits of memberships in all the following organizations:

- ABA
- U.S. Travel Association
- Brand USA
- Destinations International
- IGLTA
- Discover New England
- Connecticut Restaurant Association
- Connecticut Lodging Association

CTVISIT

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