



Connecticut Office of Statewide Marketing & Tourism
FY25 Strategic Plan



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Dear Industry Partners and Stakeholders:

Much has changed in the last eighteen months since I began in this new role, all of which strengthens Connecticut's ability to market itself to the nation and the world. First, the creation of the new Office of Statewide Marketing and Tourism (SMT) marks a significant milestone, uniting the former Connecticut Office of Statewide Marketing & Tourism with the Office of Marketing & Branding. This merger has not only streamlined our strategies and operations, but also enabled the hiring of four talented new team members, including two who are now leading the tourism and creative divisions within SMT. Moreover, we have launched a new, comprehensive statewide marketing strategy, positioning tourism as the tip of the spear in our efforts to bring more taxpayers to the state – visitors, residents, and businesses – while changing perceptions of “The Land of Steady Habits.”

While our core marketing plans remain consistent with previous year's efforts, our state and tourism brands, creative, and messaging have become more aligned than ever before. Tourism has adopted the Make It Here campaign, ensuring our themes are heard year round by target audiences and never going dark. This unity in messaging is particularly valuable to achieving the governor's goals of growing the state population, increasing the number of good paying jobs available, and growing the state economy. The cohesion ensures that every outreach effort shapes a larger, more impactful story that inspires people to want to visit, move, or grow their business in Connecticut.

Under SMT's leadership, we are committed to fostering greater collaboration and coordination within the industry. Despite being one of the smallest states in the nation, we have a diverse range of stakeholders, many of whom have been operating independently. Given the competitive and increasingly fragmented media markets we operate in, it is imperative that we work together. By pooling our resources and efforts, we can amplify our collective voice and extend our reach further and faster than if we were to continue working independently.

Connecticut is truly one of the best places in the nation to live, work, and play, and our vibrant travel industry plays a pivotal role in making that possible. The abundance of experiences we offer in such a compact area makes our state an ideal place to build a career, raise a family, and foster a strong community. Together, let's continue the important work of showcasing the real Connecticut to the world.

Yours in service,

Anthony M. Anthony
Chief Marketing Officer, State of Connecticut

An aerial photograph of a person in a blue kayak on clear, turquoise water. The person is wearing a yellow life vest and a white shirt. The water is vibrant and shows some ripples and small whitecaps. The overall scene is bright and serene.

VISION

“By making Connecticut a place people want to visit, they’ll **fall in love** with it as a place to live.

If people choose to **make their life** and families here, businesses can grow here.

If businesses can **grow here**, capital will be invested here.

If capital is invested here, more businesses and **jobs will thrive here.**

It all starts with the visit and showing people all we have to offer as a place to **live, work, and play.”**



VISION

Actively shape and refine perceptions of Connecticut as one of the best places in the world to visit and call home, where anyone can start a career, make their family, build a business, and be part of a vibrant and inclusive community.

MISSION

Increase awareness of Connecticut's leisure offerings to drive growth in the travel industry, while maximizing economic impact for our municipalities, regions, and the state.

POSITIONING

Only in Connecticut can visitors, residents, entrepreneurs, and workers alike have the ability to shape the experience, life, and careers they desire.



BUILDING THE TEAM





LEADERSHIP



ANTHONY ANTHONY
Chief Marketing Officer



RACHEL LENDA
Tourism Director



ELLEN WOOLF
Brand Director



MORGAN NYERICK
Creative Director

CREATIVE, DIGITAL & OUTREACH



ROB DAMROTH
Research, Analytics,
& Web Editor



SHAFI KHAN
Digital Marketing
Associate



JILL LARSEN
Community &
Outreach Specialist

SALES & CONTRACTS



SUE HENRIQUE
Global Sales



AL STRONG
Drive Market
& Visitor Services



**CONNECTICUT
CONVENTION &
SPORTS BUREAU**



JEN HAAG
Grants & Contracts
Specialist



STRATEGIC GUIDES

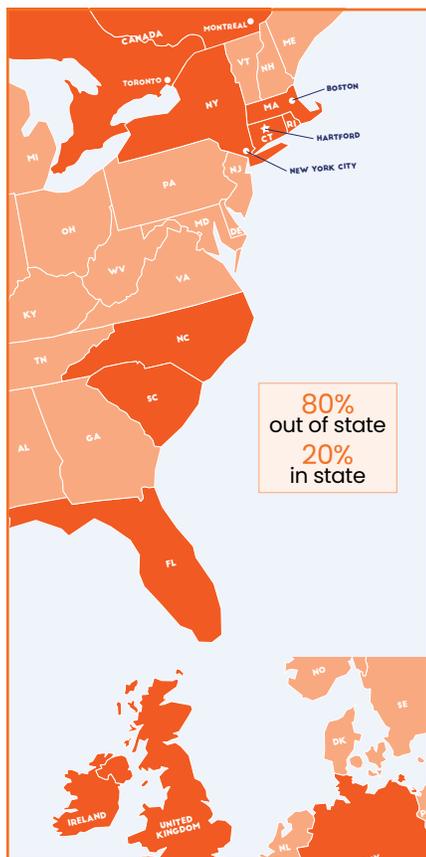




CHANGE TO KEY STRATEGIES

- Enrich and embolden the cohesion of the State of Connecticut brand with the CTVisit brand including the overarching message, “Make It Here” so that messaging builds a unified 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 FY25 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. Geographically target the best performing audiences in:

- 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
- Georgia

TARGET INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

We will lean into 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:

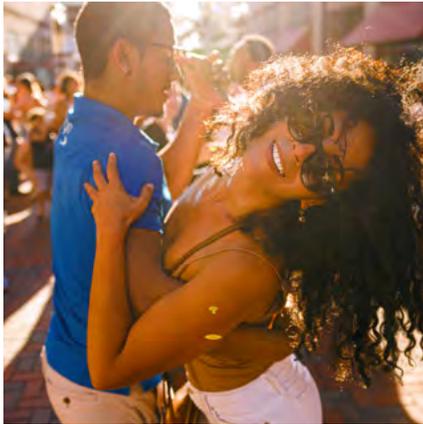
- Families with children at home
- Arts, culture, and entertainment seekers
- History lovers
- Outdoor enthusiasts
- LGBTQ+ community
- Foodies
- Green/Sustainability-focused audience
- Wellness/Relaxation hunters
- Young adults and empty nesters





PAID TOURISM MARKETING





Office of Statewide Marketing and 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.

The office 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

- In FY24, the 'Find Your Vibe' theme was replaced with the statewide theme, 'Make it Here'— unifying the strategic message of the state across all paid media. For the tourism campaign, the "Make It Here" concept illustrates every traveler's ability to make their experience their own, emphasizing the unique and vast offerings in Connecticut.
- Support the CTvisit brand personality in all advertising touch points
 - Present a younger, more energetic vibe
 - Show social, ethnic, and cultural diversity
 - Highlight surprising and unique experiences
 - Feature more artsy, creative, and innovative offerings
- By continuing to hone the message that Connecticut is vibrant for all, we will maintain mixing classic and beloved experiences 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 1

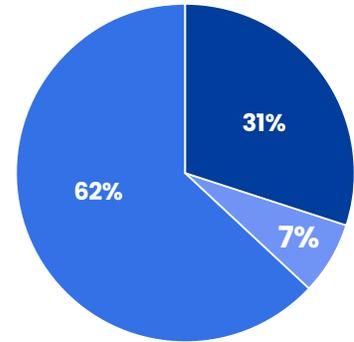
Allocate the budget to support each season.

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)



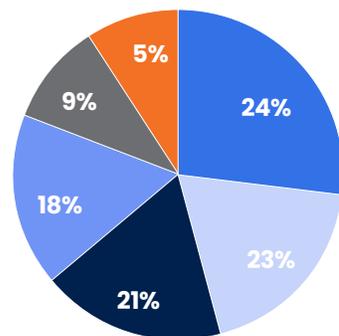
- Spring/Summer: (22 weeks)
- Fall: (12 weeks)
- Holiday/Winter: (18 weeks)

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:

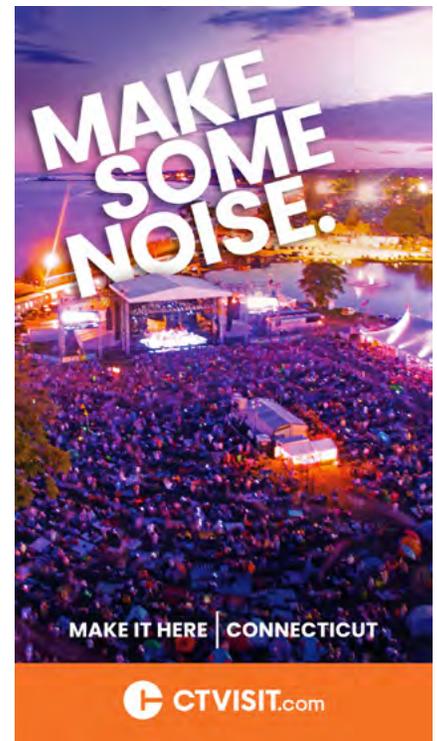


- Digital Video
- Content Seeding
- Social Post
- Linear and Digital TV
- Search
- High-Impact & Digital Video OOH



EXAMPLES OF PLANNED PLACEMENTS

- Moynihan Penn Station OOH
- Digital billboards
- Live Nation screens at events
- Airline WiFi screen video
- Social video
- Social media posts
- Native content
- Search Engine Marketing





PROGRAM OF WORK: FY23-24

JULY – AUGUST 2024

- Continue the summer campaign that began in FY24.
- Build out new creative for fall with the “Make It Here” campaign message, video, and still imagery.
- Develop FY25 media plan.
- Continuously update performing CTvisit.com content.
- Create additional, new CTvisit.com fall content.
- Investigate opportunities for efficacy in advertising for the fall/winter campaigns.

EARLY SEPTEMBER – MID NOVEMBER

- Launch and continually optimize the fall campaign.
- Refresh holiday/winter campaign to include the ‘Make it Here’ campaign.
- Create additional, new CTvisit.com holiday/winter content.

LATE NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2024

- Optimize the holiday campaign.
- Investigate opportunities for efficacy in advertising for spring/summer.

JANUARY – MARCH 2025

- Optimize the winter campaign.
- Refresh the spring/summer ‘Make it Here’ with updated imagery, inclusions, and treatments.
- Update performing CTvisit.com content.
- Create additional, new CTvisit.com spring/summer content.

APRIL – JULY 2024

- Launch and continuously optimize spring/summer campaign.



PR AND SOCIAL MEDIA





PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Statewide Marketing and Tourism Office emphasizes 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 influencer’s, and attends key industry events to secure positive coverage about Connecticut.

MOMENTUM IN THE PRESS

March 2024 also saw spectacular success with a media event touting Connecticut’s oyster offerings. The event launched the new CT Oyster Trail and a documentary featuring Connecticut’s oyster excellence. The event and PR activity around it sparked over a billion media impressions.

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.

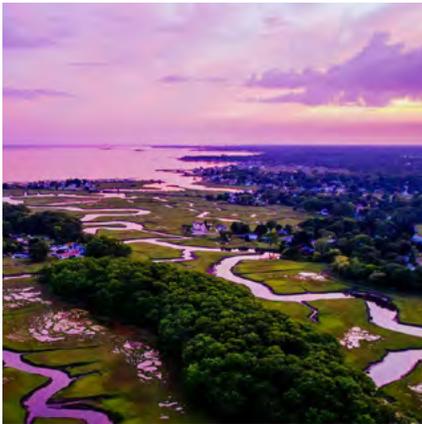


STRATEGY 2

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.
- **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.



GOAL 2: RAISE AWARENESS OF IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM TO RESIDENTS

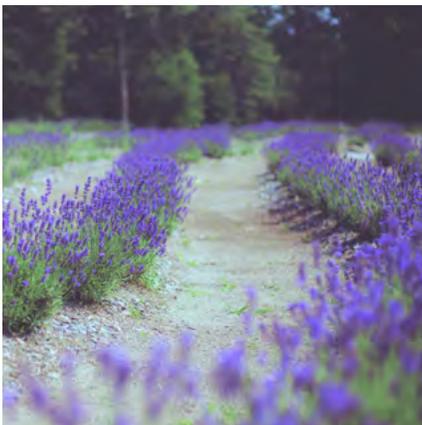
Generate awareness of the economic impact of Connecticut's tourism industry among key audiences/stakeholders.

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.



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.
- **Multi-platform Amplification:** Share the accolades across a diverse range of media platforms.



SOCIAL MEDIA

The Office of Statewide Marketing and 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 1: 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 video and photography generated by staff, travel partners, and UGC to show the "real" side of Connecticut.
- Leverage vertical video trends or "Reels" in the style of Instagram to surprise and delight viewers.



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.





CONTENT AND WEBSITE





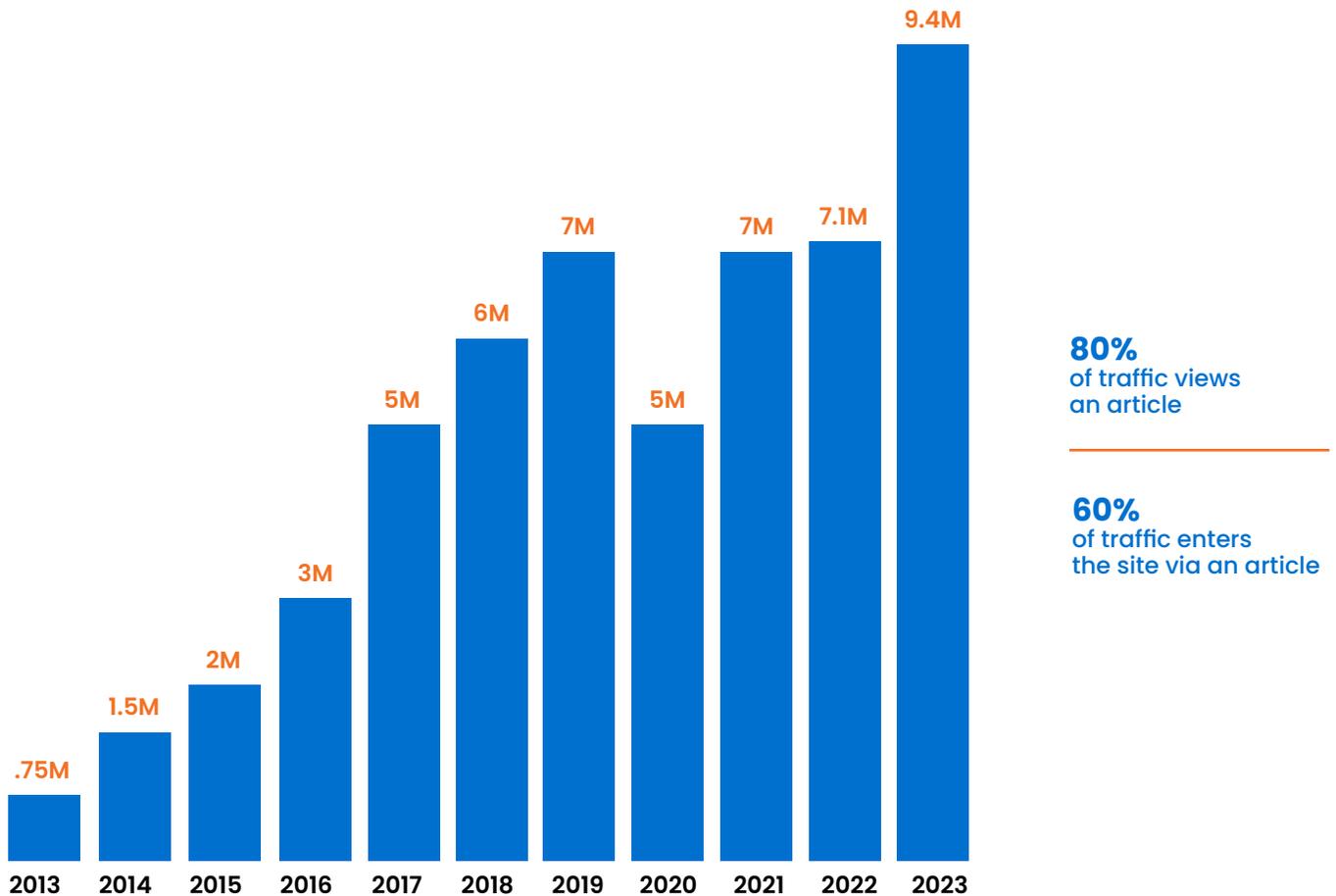
The Office of Statewide Marketing and Tourism administers CTvisit.com and manages all aspects of every form of content on the site, including:

- 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 700 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.

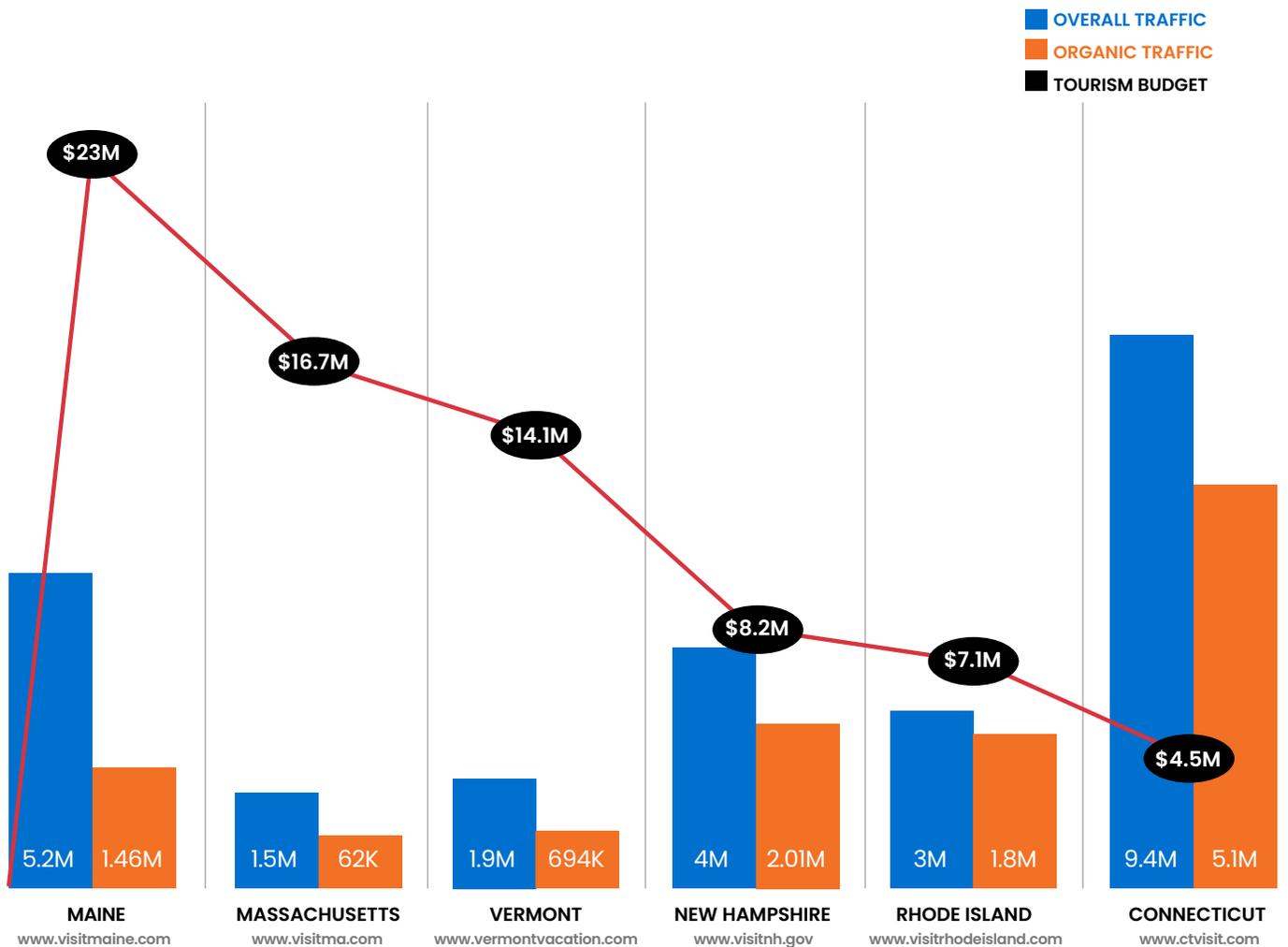
CTvisit.com is the hub of Connecticut Tourism’s marketing communications.

The site received 9.4 million visits in 2023, significantly more than any other state in the region.

CTVISIT.COM TRAFFIC OVER TIME



CONTENT AND WEBSITE



Traffic numbers derived from SEMrush and Google Analytics. The same formula was applied to all states. Please consider this directional but based on neutral third party data.



GOAL 1: STAY ON TOP

In early 2024, CTvisit.com relaunched with updated design and optimized content features, now on the Drupal 10 platform. The FY25 needs are to continuously optimize this new cornerstone of Connecticut's tourism marketing.

STRATEGY 1

Maintain and refresh the body of 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 700 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.

- Maintain all relevant existing content, continuously updating articles.
- Add new content inspired by trends and data.

STRATEGY 2

Educate partners on how to realize the opportunities in created by the new site's powerful new features.

TACTICS

- Create instructional videos to assist partners in optimizing listings.
- Encourage all listing partners to update seasonal images to take advantage of new seasonal display features.

STRATEGY 3

Continue developing small experience improvements and upgrade the user experience.

TACTICS

- Create a punchlist of improvements.
- Determine which items are most urgent and fit within budget.
- Address each item in order of priority.



SPECIAL THEMES



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 FY25, there are a few areas of special focus that we will be investing extra energy into.



GOAL 1: ENHANCE CONNECTICUT'S REPUTATION ACROSS A MIX OF OFFERINGS

We have seen strong success in touting the wide range of offerings, from the surprising to the iconic.

STRATEGY

Depict the full range of Connecticut's offering.

TACTIC

Promote a varied mix of activities, tying it all together under the 'Make It Here' experience theme.

FAMILY FUN



CULTURAL DISTRICTS



CHARMING TOWNS AND ARCHITECTURE



ICONIC ATTRACTIONS





GOAL 2:

FUEL CONTINUED MOMENTUM FOR SPECIAL TOPICS

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 1

Become a mecca for oysters.

TACTICS

- Create and update content on CTvisit.
- Grow distribution and audience for the oyster themed documentary, including at film festivals.
- Continue aggressive pitching of this angle in PR efforts.
- Encourage industry partners to keep this office informed of relevant news that we can amplify.



STRATEGY 2

Promote Connecticut as an innovative, creative, and important fountainhead and hot spot for theater.

TACTICS

- Continue promoting theater-specific video social posts.
- Update and enhance theater content on CTvisit.
- Continue encouraging greater participation from our theater partners on CTvisit.com.
- Drive paid and earned traffic to theater content on CTvisit.
- Promote specific shows on CTvisit.com with direct links to ticketing.





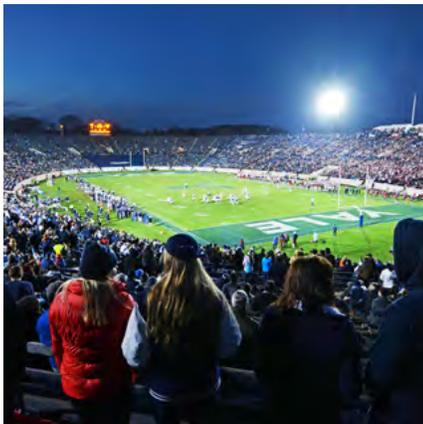
STRATEGY 3

Continue amplifying 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 state in 2023, Why This Place, updated this report in 2024, continuing to name Connecticut as #1, so we continue to tout this accolade.



STRATEGY 4

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

TACTICS

- Tout all #1 pizza in America.
- Continue the significant press buzz stirred by naming New Haven the pizza capitol of the U.S. in DC and on Connecticut highway welcome signs.
- Fan the flames of competitive spirit with neighboring states around our claims, but do so sparingly and sportingly.



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.

TACTIC

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.



ANALYTICS & RESEARCH





The Office of Statewide Marketing and 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.
- **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. FY25 will mark its 13th year.
- Third-party studies that COT can acquire.

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

ECONOMIC IMPACT:

The following information is from the most recent study from calendar year 2023.

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 spending!
(including over \$11B in direct visitor spending)



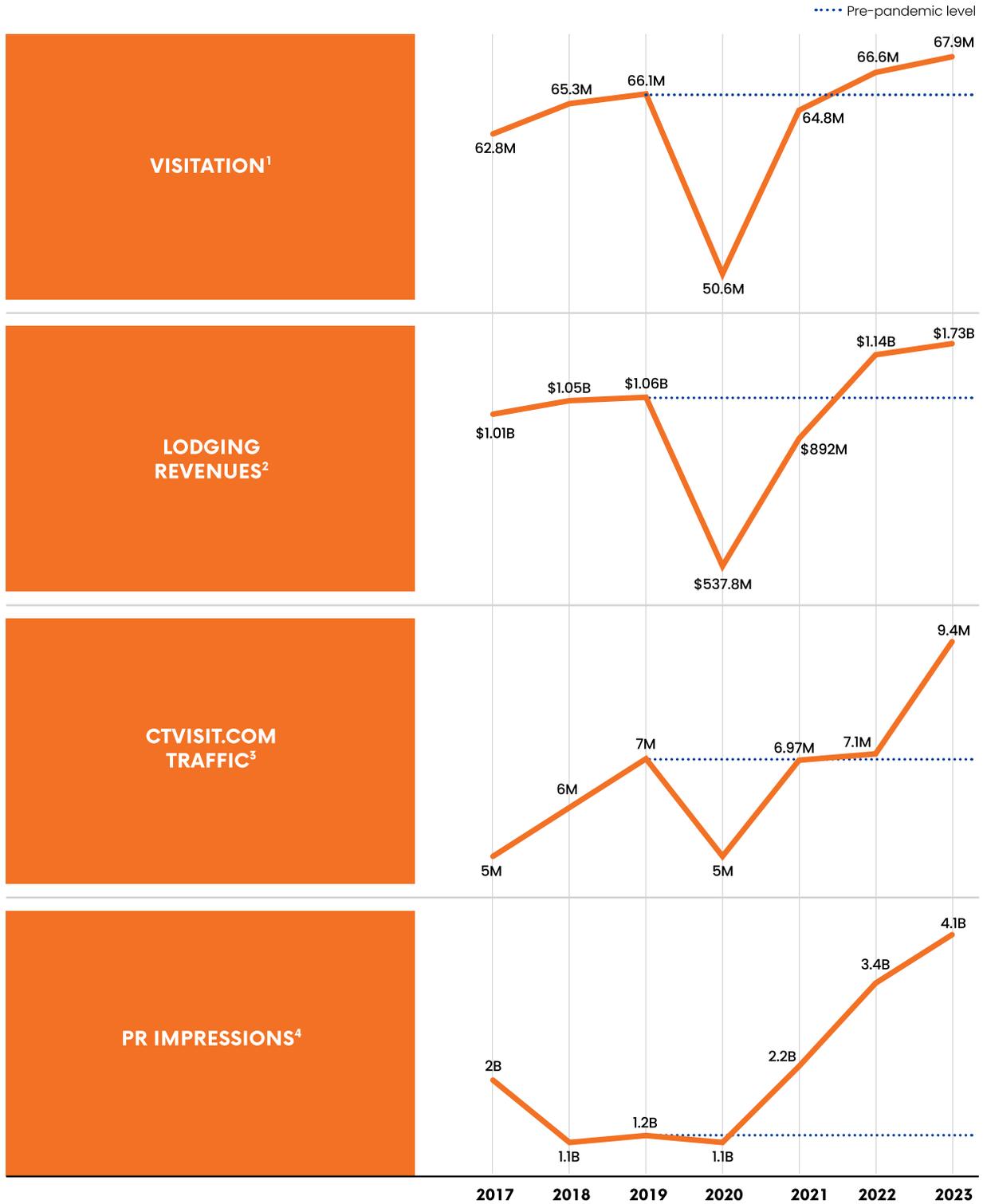
\$1.2 billion in state and local taxes!



124,400 jobs supported by visitor spending!



Our key metrics show calendar 2023 was a strong year for Connecticut Tourism. Early indications for 2024 show some softening, but it is too early to report official stats from our primary sources.



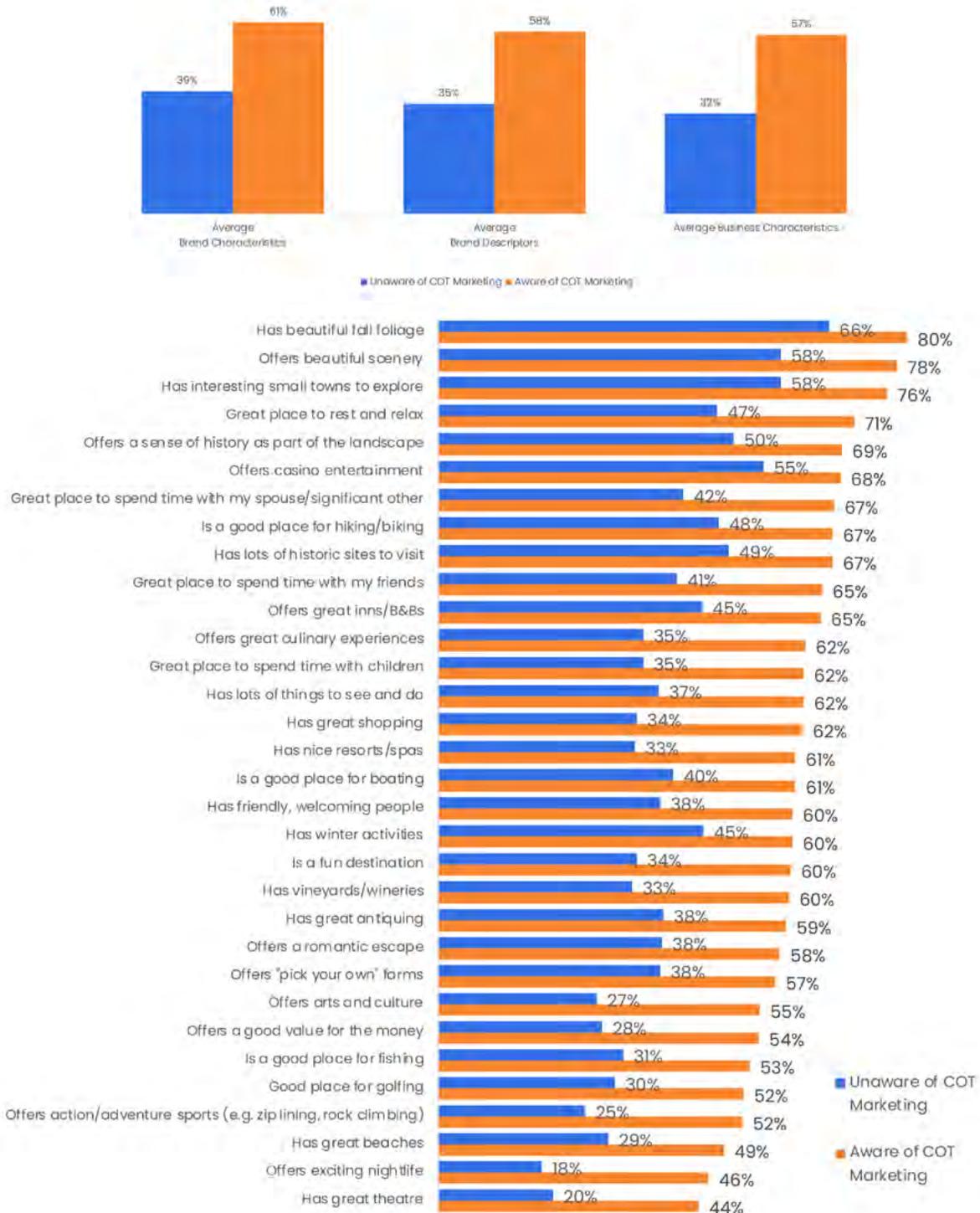
• Sources: 1 Tourism Economic reports from each year; 2 STR Reports from each year; 3 Google Analytics from each year; 4 Cision reports from each year



The following results taken from the annual Brand Attitudes and Awareness study show that the marketing efforts make a big impact on those who see it.

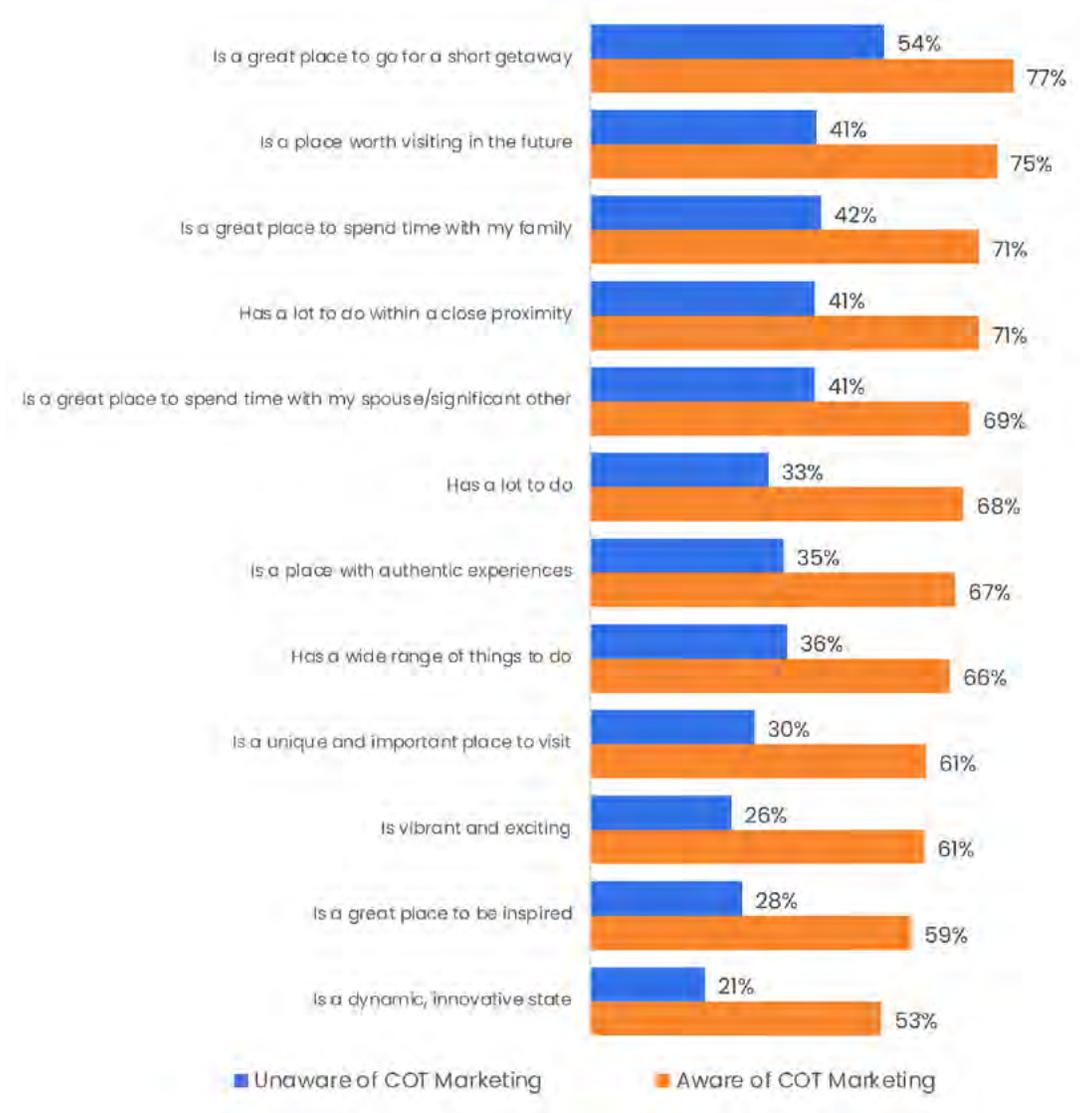
MARKETING IMPACT ON BRAND DESCRIPTORS

The study clearly demonstrates that the current marketing efforts greatly improve all brand attitude measures.





% AGREE STRONGLY WITH STATEMENTS AFTER SEEING MARKETING



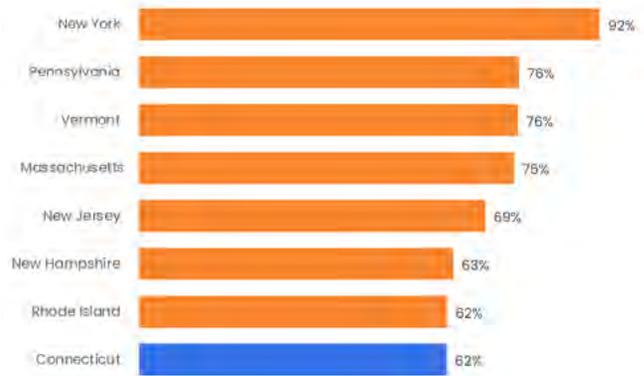


AIDED BRAND AWARENESS

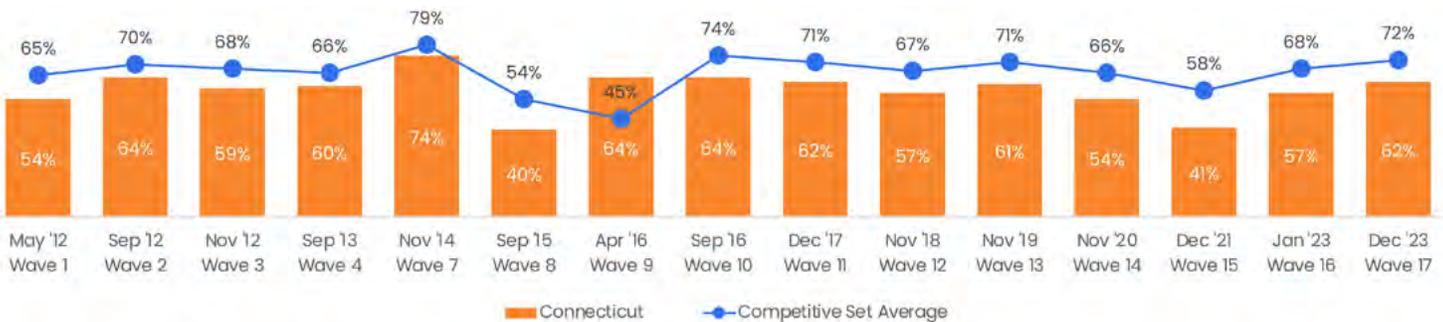
Aided brand awareness trends in the right direction. More than 6 in 10 travelers (62%) in New England aged 25-64 are familiar with Connecticut as a place to visit, up 5 points from last year and well above the state’s historic average (58%).

Despite Connecticut’s strong performance in 2023, however, it remains in last place among the competitive set which averaged 72% this year.

AIDED BRAND AWARENESS COMPETITIVE STATES



AIDED BRAND AWARENESS HISTORY
CT Historical Average 58%





INTENT TO RECOMMEND

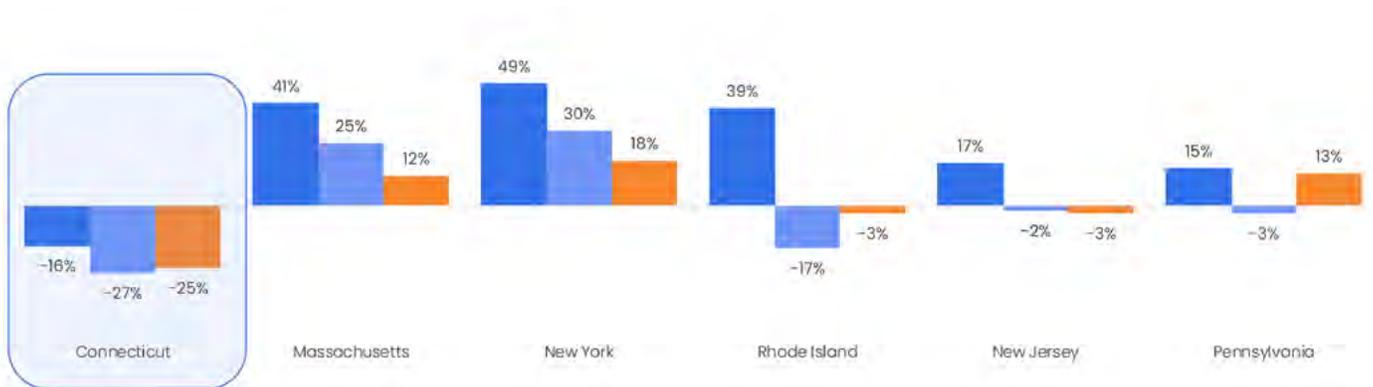
We added a new question to this annual study in 2023, asking about the intent to recommend Connecticut. Overall, 51% indicated they would be likely to recommend Connecticut as a Place to Visit, 42% would recommend it as a Place to Work and 39% would recommend it as a Place to Live.

However, Connecticut has more Detractors than Promoters in each category: -16% as Place to Visit, -27% as Place to Work and -25% as a Place to Live.

In 2025, we will begin initiatives to improve this metric, though we expect this will take time and consistent effort.

INTENT TO RECOMMEND YOUR STATE AS A.....

- Place to Visit
- Place to Work
- Place to Live





VISITOR & TARGET MARKET DEMOGRAPHICS

Overall, Connecticut visitors have comparatively high household incomes, were a bit older and somewhat more diverse in 2023 than reported in recent years.

LGBTQ+ visitors to Connecticut earn slightly higher incomes (\$148k vs \$144k), are slightly younger (43.0 yrs vs 43.5 yrs) and are less diverse (16% vs 21%). They also visit more frequently (5.3 visits vs 4.0) and exhibit higher intent to visit (84% vs 74%).

Compared to H2R’s Travel Sentiment monitor which tracks traveler profiles and attitudes nationwide, Connecticut visitors earn much higher incomes (\$144k vs \$81k nationwide), are somewhat younger (43.5 yrs vs 47.2 yrs) and are more diverse (21% vs 18%).

Category	2023 Visitors	2022 Visitors	2021 Visitors	2023 LGBTQ+ Visitors
Household Income	\$143.5k	\$142.8k	\$133.3k	\$148.4k
Age of Travel Respondent	43.5	42.5	41.0	43.0
25-34	16%	22%	32%	16%
35-44	42%	38%	33%	42%
45-64	42%	40%	35%	42%
Interest in Visiting Next 2 Years	57%	61%	70%	61%
Intent to Visit Next 12 Months	74%	74%	78%	84%
Number of Visits Past 5 Years	4.0	4.1	4.1	5.3
White, Non-Hispanic*	79%	81%	84%	84%
Black, Non-Hispanic	7.3%	5.9%	2.6%	7.9%
Hispanic	6.8%	8.5%	7.9%	7.9%
Asian	6.1%	5.1%	7.2%	5.3%
Other	4.2%	3.0%	2.0%	2.6%
LGBTQ+	5.3%	6.5%	8.5%	100%



 **VISITOR CONCIERGE SERVICES**



Our team 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 1: **OPTIMIZE STATE'S CONCIERGE SERVICES**

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

STRATEGY

Improve all direct consumer touchpoints.

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. For Big E 2024, we updated the Connecticut building with the new branding, an all-new experiential display, and a new Connecticut merchandise store.
- Improve the Welcome Center Experience.
 - Connecticut's Welcome Centers have been open through the busy summer season, staffed by COT's trained seasonal employees, who have been directing visitors to points of interest throughout the state.





INDUSTRY OUTREACH





The Office of Statewide Marketing and 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

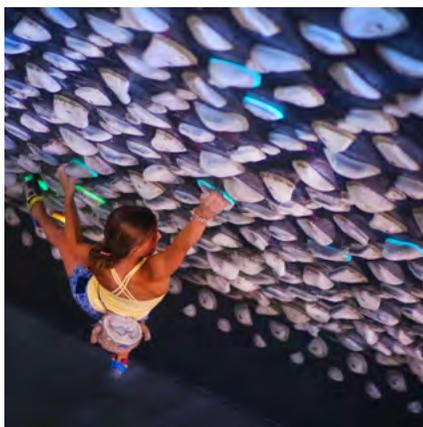
We can only promote what we know about, so we will make organized efforts to gather input from our industry stakeholders.

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 we 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.





GLOBAL TRAVEL INDUSTRY SALES





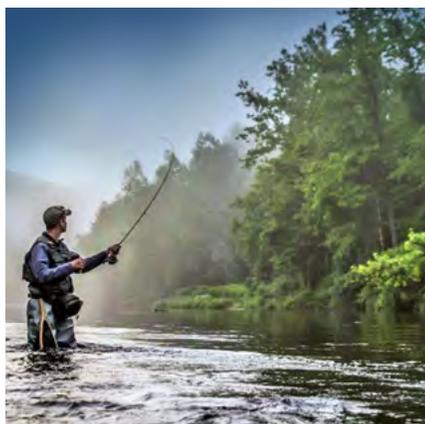
The Office of Statewide Marketing and Tourism leisure sales division provides travel industry professionals access to the resources they need for planning, marketing, and selling the state as a leisure group and FIT destination.

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.

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

In support of the Aer Lingus Dublin/Hartford flight, we partner 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 sales representatives to develop working relationships with the travel trade through our participation in the organization's sales and marketing initiatives.

In partnership with the regional tourism districts, we 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 1: SUPPORT DIRECT SALES

Increase the volume and revenue of leisure travel.

STRATEGY 1

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 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 FAMiliariation 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: FY24-25

SEPTEMBER 2024

- International Sales Training

OCTOBER 2024

- Brand USA Travel Week

NOVEMBER 2024

- Travel Centres Sales/Networking
- Visit USA Ireland Thanksgiving Event
- DNE Sales Mission/Germany

JANUARY 2025

- Holiday World
- ITTN Awards

FEBRUARY 2025

- American Bus Association Marketplace
- American Bus Association FAM Tour

MARCH 2025

- Aer Lingus Roadshow
- Nevin McGuire Travel & Food Show

APRIL 2025

- DNE Summit
- DNE FAM Tour & Travel
- DNE FAM Media

MAY 2025

- DNE UK/Ireland Sales Mission

JUNE 2025

- IPW

JULY 2025

- TravelMedia Soiree
- International Media & 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: DIRECT SALES

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

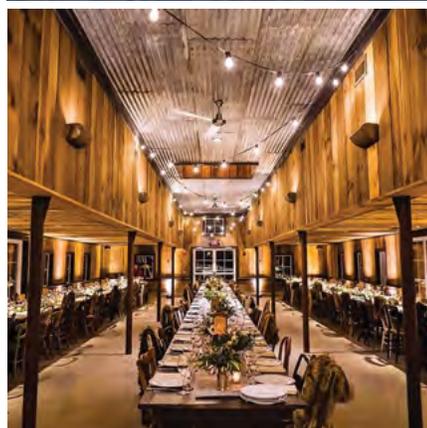
STRATEGY 1

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 to sell 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 find what they need to host a successful event.
- 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.
- 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 Statewide Marketing & Tourism, Regional Tourism Districts, the Connecticut Lodging Association, and the Connecticut Restaurant Association.
- Form partnerships with other agencies and organizations, chambers of commerce, rotary, 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: TECHNOLOGY AND E-MARKETING

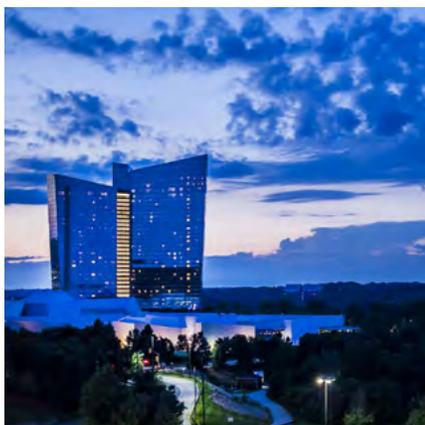
Increase client visibility and staff effectiveness to market the State of Connecticut as a premier destination for national, regional, and statewide group business.

STRATEGY 1

Invest in innovative technology 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 Statewide Marketing & Tourism to maximize the CTMEETINGS visibility on CTvisit.com.
- Invest in search engine optimization (SEO).
- Enhance e-marketing with geo-targeting and other technology opportunities.
- Design new unified collateral material such as multi-use digital brochures.





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.
- 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 function 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:

CONVENTION SERVICES

Find new ways to attract new business and returning business.

STRATEGY 1

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.
- Visit events as a courtesy and to provide service to the group whenever necessary.
- 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 client's needs for upcoming events to industry partners.
- Share client's 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.
- Media outreach and social media promotion before and during event.
- Monitor postings for reviews and comments.
- Provide promotional collateral pre-event and at meeting site.
- Develop 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: **ADVOCACY**

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

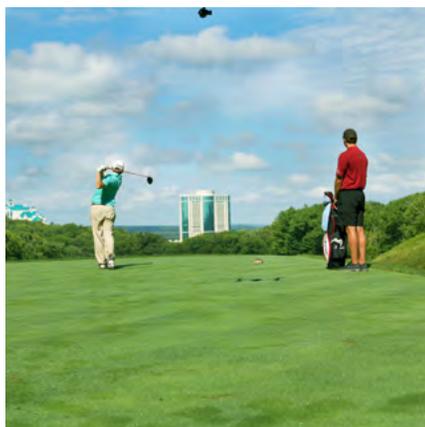
- Work closely with Destination International on best practices.
- Identify the areas in which the Connecticut experience could be improved for meeting, sports and event clients and attendees:
 - Transportation issues to and from Bradley International Airport (BDL), Tweed New Haven Airport (HVN) and 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, Lt. Governor, and State Legislators to keep them updated on CTMEETINGS successes.
- 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.



SPORTS TOURISM

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 thousands of fans.

Attract, host, and support regional, national, and international sports events with a focus on economic impact and media exposure.

GOAL 1: DIRECT SALES

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

STRATEGY 1

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 event.
- 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 which can generate new business.
- Schedule sales missions to destinations that are the 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 in 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 Office of Statewide Marketing and 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 1: 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 influencer’s 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



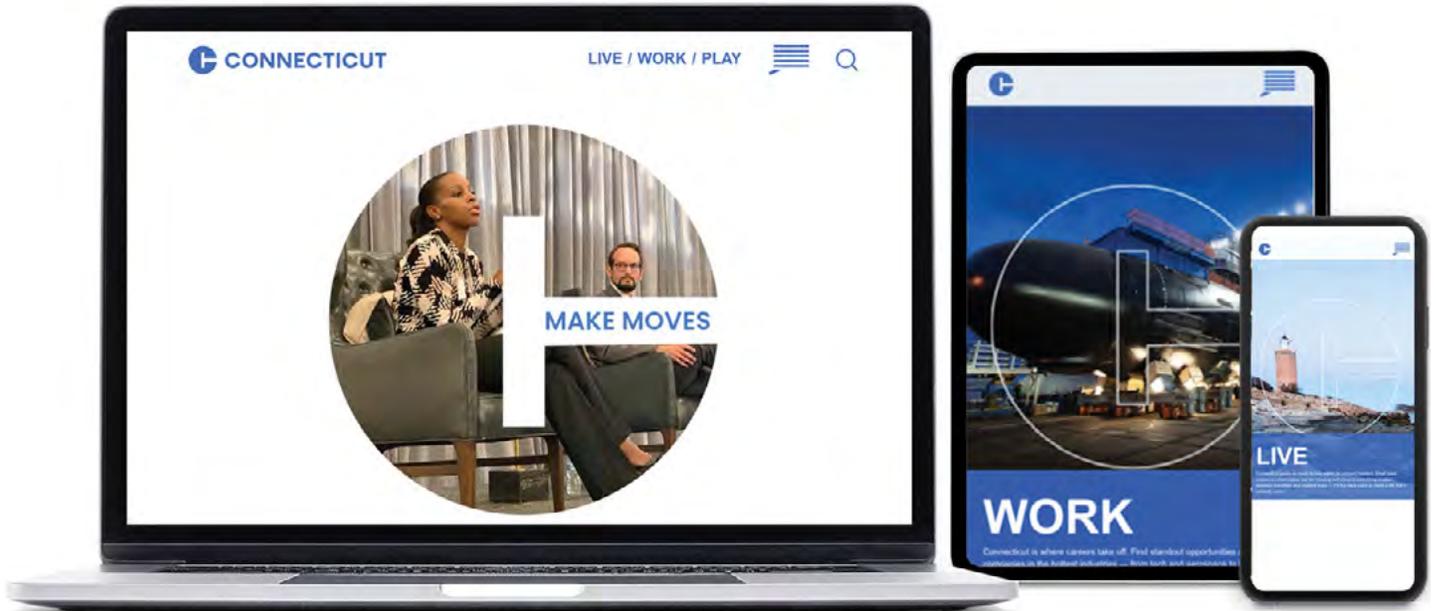
LIVE+WORK





STATE BRAND CAMPAIGN

The state's new brand and the Make It Here campaign theme have made a big impact in 2024. We are very pleased with the adoption of this brand across state agencies and will continue to push for greater integration of all messaging within the Make It Here theme.



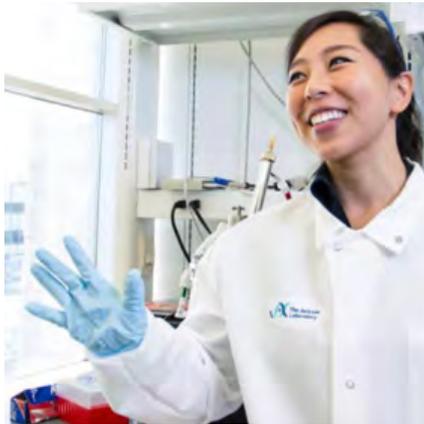
CTMAKEITHERE.COM

We are pleased to announce an all new website promoting living, working and playing in Connecticut. This new site features helpful information and the stories of so many who make Connecticut their home. We encourage all to share this site as a tool to help inspire those who are considering making a life here—whether they are choosing a new job, a new home, or a place to put down roots or start a family.



CONTENT MARKETING

We will utilize the wealth of original content on CTMakeItHere.com to fuel a content marketing campaign aimed at reaching those who may be making a new career or lifestyle decision. We will also be creating fresh content, amplifying the voices of a wide array of individuals who are proud to have chosen to live and work in Connecticut, ranging from corporations that choose to operate here to entrepreneurs just starting new businesses.





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