

## Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan Updated: April 2020

### Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc on many aspects of people's lives throughout the world as we draft this plan in spring 2020. The health and financial impacts of this crisis will worsen in the coming weeks and months impacting all of us in ways we couldn't have imagined just a few months ago.

As we learned painfully in March, the U.S. travel industry was devastated swiftly and severely as visitors cut short vacations, while meetings, sports and cultural events were canceled months into the future.

Locally, tourism is one of metro Tucson's top industries. Tourism employs 25,000 Pima County residents, who serve seven million overnight visitors annually. Those visitors spent \$2.5 billion in Pima County in 2018, including \$77 million in local taxes.

The COVID-19 pandemic cut short metro Tucson's peak tourism season of mid-January through April. Daily lodging data shows the exodus of Tucson visitors began the second week of March 2020.

Small businesses make up the great majority of companies that serve our visitors. The money they make during Tucson's peak tourism season sustains them through the summer months when visitor numbers drop due to our triple-digit temperatures. The sad reality is that some of these businesses, which closed during the pandemic to protect public health, will never reopen. Job losses and layoffs in metro Tucson's tourism industry were severe by late March.

To provide perspective, metro Tucson's lodging occupancy was 83.6% in March 2019 with hotel/resort room revenue at \$56.1 million. In March 2020, those numbers were 77.7% and \$44.5 million, respectively. It worsened in April. Metro Tucson properties posted an average of 71.9% occupancy in April 2020 with room revenue of \$40.5 million. Those figures are down 11.9% and 27.5%, respectively from April 2019 (71.9% occupancy, \$40.5 million).

Tucson's not alone. Cities throughout the United States and the world are dealing with drops in travel that equal or surpass what we're experiencing.

What history has proven time and again, though, is people's desire to connect with each other face to face and experience places that enrich them on multiple levels. Our customers will travel again.

We realize the faucet will not turn on immediately. Travelers need some certainty they are safe from the impacts of COVID-19 before they return fully to their traveling ways. Additionally, millions of American and international leisure travelers, businesses, associations and sports event organizers are being impacted financially by the pandemic.

We at Visit Tucson will control what we can. During the next year, we will remind our customers about the many ways they can "Free Themselves" in Tucson and Southern Arizona. And, when they're ready to travel, we will ask them to visit Tucson.

We invite you to review the following metro Tucson 2020-21 tourism recovery plan, which we will update as COVID-19 impacts ebb and flow. We welcome all ideas to contribute to our region's recovery and to bring visitors back to Tucson and Southern Arizona in the coming year.

## Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan

Updated: April 2020

### Goals (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021)

Goal 1: Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

Goal 2: Work with local and regional government and business partners to help our community recover from COVID-19's medical and fiscal impacts.

Goal 3: Reshape Visit Tucson's operation, as needed, to maximize its 2020-21 impacts, while positioning metro Tucson's tourism industry and Visit Tucson for recovery in 2021-22.

### Goal 1

Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

#### Overview—Goal 1, Strategy 1

Because we believe it will take time for visitors outside Arizona to resume their traveling ways, we will encourage Tucsonans to be tourists in their own town, while inviting potential visitors from throughout the state to experience Tucson and Southern Arizona's robust travel offerings.

#### Strategy 1

Market and promote Tucson and Southern Arizona as a destination with beautiful, wide-open spaces where locals can rejuvenate and recreate.

#### Tactics—while travel warning/restrictions are in place

- Communications: Use Visit Tucson's social media to encourage locals to abide by stay-at-home edicts from local, county and/or state government officials, to practice social distancing and to follow CDC guidelines to avoid coming down with and transmitting COVID-19.
- Marketing and Communications: Remind locals about our region's natural beauty and wide-open spaces via posting scenic images and videos on Visit Tucson's website and social media.
- Marketing and Communications: While government-ordered shutdowns of restaurant dining rooms are still in place, encourage locals to support area restaurants by purchasing meals via takeout, drive-through or delivery, along with gift cards for future use.
- Marketing and Communications: Partner with Sonoran Restaurant Week operators to create a "Tucson To-Go" program allowing local restaurants to create and offer \$30 meals for two at [www.sonoranrestaurantweek.com](http://www.sonoranrestaurantweek.com).
- Marketing and Communications: Encourage locals to enhance their physical and mental well-being via hiking, cycling and exploring metro Tucson, while practicing social distancing and safe habits.
- Marketing and Communications: Promote initiatives to support metro Tucson restaurants, attractions and other area businesses via Visit Tucson's website, social media and partners'/stakeholders' communications vehicles.
- Marketing, Communications, Partnership/Visitor Services and Executive Staff: Work with the Southern Arizona Attractions Alliance and area attractions to create and disseminate virtual programming to keep attractions top of mind for locals and visitors.
- Film: Remind locals about Tucson's/Southern Arizona's rich film history and encourage them to watch films and television episodes filmed in the region while sequestered at home.

**Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan**  
**Updated: April 2020**

**Goal 1 (continued)**

Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

Strategy 1 (continued)

Market and promote Tucson and Southern Arizona as a destination with beautiful, wide-open spaces where locals can rejuvenate and recreate.

Tactics—once travel resumes

- Marketing, Communications and Partnership/Visitor Services: Promote metro Tucson stay-cations at area hotels and resorts to Arizonans. Generate actionable packages/rates vs. awareness.
- Marketing, Communications, Partnership/Visitor Services and Executive Staff: Encourage Tucsonans to patronize locally owned and operated restaurants via dining in and takeout, drive-through or delivery services.
- Marketing, Communications, Partnership/Visitor Services and Executive Staff: Encourage Tucsonans to support area attractions through visiting and purchasing memberships.
- Marketing, Communications, Partnership/Visitor Services and Executive Staff: Encourage Tucsonans to “fly local” out of Tucson International Airport (TUS) to help bring back some routes that were lost during the COVID-19 slowdown.
- Marketing and Communications: Encourage locals to maintain their physical and mental well-being via hiking, cycling and exploring metro Tucson.
- Communications: Sponsor Sonoran Restaurant Week in September 2020 encouraging Tucsonans to support local restaurants.
- Marketing, Communications, Partnership/Visitor Services and Sports: Promote other local events and teams via Visit Tucson's communications vehicles to encourage locals to reconnect with each other and their community.

**Visit Tucson’s 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan**  
**Updated: April 2020**

**Goal 1 (continued)**

Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

**Overview—Goal 1, Strategy 2**

Visit Tucson’s initial focus will be to market our region in “short-haul” cities to travelers within a six-hour drive and/or a non-stop flight of two hours or less. As customers become more comfortable traveling, we will increase the geographic reach of our marketing to all cities with non-stop flights to Tucson and other top, domestic feeder markets. We will invest in generating earned media. Visit Tucson’s communications team has generated more than \$30 million in Tucson and Southern Arizona travel coverage in each of the past three years.

Strategy 2

Market and promote Tucson and Southern Arizona as a destination with beautiful, wide-open spaces where domestic visitors can rejuvenate and recreate.

Tactics—while travel warnings/restrictions are in place

- Marketing and Communications: Leverage Visit Tucson’s Free Yourself brand to remind travelers that now is not the time to visit, but show them Tucson’s and Southern Arizona’s wide open spaces, along with our unique climate, dining and cultural experiences. Tell prospective visitors that all of this is waiting for them when they are ready to travel.

Tactics—once travel resumes

- Marketing: Tweak ad messaging to show travelers enjoying active (hiking, cycling, horseback riding, birding, golf, visiting attractions) and passive (spa, pool, dining, wine/whiskey/beer tasting, astronomy, cultural activities) offerings, while engaging in social distancing in Tucson and Southern Arizona. Essentially, we will leverage our “Free Yourself” brand.
- Marketing and Communications: Incorporate well-being into our marketing and promotion. It fits with our post-COVID-19 messaging, while addressing a focal point of metro Tucson’s 10-year tourism master plan.
- Marketing, Communications and Partnership/Visitor Services: Work with the Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance to promote outdoor experiences related to the area.
- Marketing and Communications: Further strengthen the collaboration of our smaller marketing and communications teams to leverage every ad placement and ensure consistent messaging in all channels.
- Communications: Bring targeted travel media to Tucson, including leveraging the Travel Classics West Conference in Scottsdale, Ariz., in November 2020, to host participating journalists and editors on press trips to Tucson.
- Communications: Travel, as needed and when safe to do so, to selected events and markets to promote Tucson to travel media.
- Communications: Proactively pitch stories to targeted media outlets and freelancers regarding metro Tucson’s travel assets.
- Communications: Collaborate with freelance writers and editors to publish Tucson travel stories that have been completed, pitch stories that can be written from previous experiences and develop evergreen content.

**Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan**  
**Updated: April 2020**

**Goal 1 (continued)**

Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

Strategy 2 (continued)

Market and promote Tucson and Southern Arizona as a destination with beautiful, wide-open spaces where domestic visitors can rejuvenate and recreate.

Tactics—once travel resumes (continued)

- Communications: Visit Tucson's outstanding social media content generated more than two million engagements (likes, shares, comments, etc...) in 2019-20. Convey our marketing/communications messages to our growing base of social media followers in a manner that continues to engage them.
- Marketing: Invest in video and images, as our 2020-21 budget allows, to enhance our brand messaging.
- Marketing: Overhaul Visit Tucson's website in 2020-21 by moving it to a more user-friendly platform that provides the flexibility to make immediate changes to the site's look, feel and content.

**Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan**  
**Updated: April 2020**

**Goal 1 (continued)**

Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

**Overview—Goal 1, Strategy 3**

We believe focusing our resources on bringing back Mexico visitors could help Tucson recover more quickly than competitive cities in 2020-21. The U.S.-Mexico border was closed to leisure travelers in late March and is expected to remain closed for multiple months. We expect to see strong demand for Tucson from Sonora visitors upon the reopening of the border. We will market heavily to bring these long-term, valued customers back to Tucson. Meanwhile, we will continue our marketing and promotional efforts in Canada with a focus on Toronto and western provinces to the extent our 2020-21 budget allows.

Strategy 3

Market and promote Tucson and Southern Arizona as a destination with beautiful, wide-open spaces where Mexico and other international visitors can rejuvenate and recreate.

Tactics—while travel warnings/restrictions are in place

- Mexico Marketing, Communications and Marketing: Remind travelers that now is not the time to visit, but show them Tucson's and Southern Arizona's wide open spaces, plus our unique climate, dining, shopping and cultural experiences. Tell prospective visitors that all of this is waiting for them when they are ready to travel.
- Mexico Marketing: Continue Facebook Live sessions in Spanish, initiated in March 2020, to educate potential Mexico visitors about metro Tucson's travel assets, our Hermosillo and Ciudad Obregon visitor centers and updates on when the U.S.-Mexico border is open for leisure travel.
- Mexico Marketing, Communications and Marketing: Create and post COVID-19 resources for travelers in English and Spanish on [www.visittucson.org](http://www.visittucson.org) and [www.vamosatucson.com](http://www.vamosatucson.com).
- Mexico Marketing: Work with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Mexico's Department of Customs and Immigration to ensure travel restrictions are lifted in a timely manner and in coordination with relevant authorities.
- Mexico Marketing: Work with U.S. Department of Commerce, Commercial Service Division, to ensure tourism is recognized as an export and that our industry receives the support offered to traditional manufacturers.

Tactics—once travel resumes

- Mexico Marketing: Promote metro Tucson shopping, entertainment and hotel deals via our Vamos a Tucson visitor centers and website, television news programs, digital billboards at border crossings, other paid advertising, social media, visitor guides and other tools.
- Mexico Marketing: Create and promote one definitive information source about travel restrictions and guidelines, with information updated regularly, for Mexico visitors traveling to Tucson.
- Mexico Marketing: Monitor the exchange rate between the Mexican peso and U.S. dollar to increase our marketing in Sonora as the peso strengthens.
- Mexico Marketing: Advocate to the U.S. State Department to facilitate B1/B2 visas emphasizing processing of visas delayed during the COVID-19 triggered shutdown of U.S.-Mexico leisure travel.

## Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan

Updated: April 2020

### Goal 1 (continued)

Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

### Strategy 3 (continued)

Market and promote Tucson and Southern Arizona as a destination with beautiful, wide-open spaces where Mexico and other international visitors can rejuvenate and recreate.

### Tactics—once travel resumes (continued)

- Mexico Marketing: Promote to Mexico visitors that they no longer have to fill out the I-94 permit to enter the U.S., which has shortened waiting times at the border.
- Mexico Marketing and Communications: Bring travel media and bloggers from Mexico to Tucson to experience our resorts, shopping and entertainment.
- Mexico Marketing and Communications: Generate and track travel media coverage in Sonora.
- Mexico Marketing: Participate in consumer tradeshows in Sonora where we can promote visiting Tucson and Southern Arizona, if budget allows.
- Mexico Marketing: Develop an online shopping program for Mexico consumers where products ordered can be collected at metro Tucson stores.
- Communications: Follow-up with Canadian media who we pitched in-person in 2019-20 to generate new stories.
- Marketing: Consider leisure travel advertising in Toronto and western Canadian cities, if budget allows.
- Marketing and Tourism: Partner with the Arizona Office of Tourism and other Arizona destination marketing organizations to promote our state, and specifically Tucson and Southern Arizona, to international media and travel trade customers.
- Mexico Marketing, Communications, Marketing and Tourism: Focus on Mexico and Canada in 2020-21 with an eye on re-establishing marketing in western Europe and connections in other overseas markets in 2021-22.
- Communications and Tourism: Market Tucson's/Southern Arizona's ranch experiences in western Europe, once potential visitors in those markets begin traveling, if budget allows.

**Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan**  
**Updated: April 2020**

**Goal 1 (continued)**

Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

**Overview—Goal 1, Strategy 4**

Our sales team began this crisis by working with area hotels and resorts, along with our meeting planner clients, seeking to rebook postponed or canceled spring/summer meetings in late 2020 or into 2021. We will solicit meetings from all markets in 2020-21, but will focus primarily on short-haul cities that are within a two-hour non-stop flight, or a drive of six hours or fewer, from Tucson. Our top priority is finding meetings that can be held in metro Tucson by June 30, 2021.

Strategy 4

Grow meetings room nights and meetings-related economic impact by aggressively selling metro Tucson as an ideal meetings destination to meeting planners throughout the nation, including Arizona associations and local companies.

Tactics

- Sales and Services: Keep our sales team strong to communicate regularly with our meeting planner customers encouraging them to re-book canceled meetings, along with new meetings in metro Tucson hotels, resorts and complementary facilities. These customers have continued to generate leads for our properties throughout the COVID-19 crisis and we believe lead volume will grow—gradually at first—as customers begin traveling.
- Sales and Services: Once travel resumes, continue bringing meeting planners to metro Tucson to experience the region, along with hotels/resorts that can accommodate their meetings.
- Sales and Services: Assuming meetings travel—particularly when long-haul or multiple flights are required—will be slow to recover, pursue and book Arizona corporate and association business that would allow delegates to drive.
- Sales and Services: Consider reallocating our sales resources to provide additional focus on Phoenix and other cities with non-stop flights to Tucson of two hours or less.
- Sales and Services: Focus on booking meetings from cities with non-stop flights to Tucson of two hours or less or where the drive is six hours or fewer.
- Executive Staff and Marketing: Partner with Tucson Airport Authority to retain existing flights and re-establish non-stop routes.
- Sales and Services, Marketing and Communications: Continue creating interest in Tucson and Southern Arizona among meeting planners and delegates.
- Sales and Services: Work with the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses (CCJW) to bring back their conventions to Tucson Convention Center (TCC) in summer 2021. CCJW canceled all 2020 conventions throughout the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The seven CCJW conventions scheduled for TCC in summer 2020 would have filled 20,000 hotel/resort room nights in metro Tucson.
- Sales and Services, Marketing and Communications: Encourage Tucson Gem, Mineral & Fossil Showcase owners, operators and vendors to take part in the 2021 event, while continuing to market the event to customers throughout the world. Also, if it's safe to travel as fall 2020 approaches, market the fall Tucson Gem, Mineral & Fossil Showcase, which has grown significantly in recent years.

## Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan

Updated: April 2020

### Goal 1 (continued)

Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

### Strategy 4 (continued)

Grow meetings room nights and meetings-related economic impact by aggressively selling metro Tucson as an ideal meetings destination to meeting planners throughout the nation, including Arizona associations and local companies.

### Tactics (continued)

- Sales and Services: Budget for, implement and track the results of Visit Tucson's double master account incentive program that will be in place for new meetings bookings that actualize in metro Tucson between May through December 2020.
- Sales and Services: Partner with Sun Corridor Inc. to identify and pursue new meetings in top metro Tucson business sectors, including optical sciences, aerospace and defense, and transportation.
- Sales and Services and Executive Staff: Encourage local businesses to partner with Visit Tucson's sales team to keep local/regional meetings in metro Tucson, while encouraging those businesses to pass along leads for meetings of which they're part, that can be pursued for area hotels, resorts and complementary facilities.
- Sales and Services, Communications and Marketing: Pursue a combination of advertising and earned media in meetings trade publications.
- Sales and Services and Executive Staff: Work with Rio Nuevo, City of Tucson, Tucson Convention Center and owners/operators of new downtown hotels to monitor whether and to what extent COVID-19 impacts will delay or derail Tucson Convention Center improvements, along with construction of new downtown hotels. Use that information to determine scope and timing regarding the creation of a downtown meetings package.

**Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan**  
**Updated: April 2020**

**Goal 1 (continued)**

Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

**Overview—Goal 1, Strategy 5**

Metro Tucson has several annual sports events that bring in visitors and drive lodging room nights, including the NOVA Home Loans Arizona Bowl, Cologuard Classic PGA TOUR Champions event, Tucson Invitational Games, Major League Soccer preseason training, Tucson Association of Realtors Soccer Shootout, Vamos a Tucson Mexican Baseball Fiesta, Cactus Classic Volleyball and El Tour de Tucson. We will continue investing in those events and others, along with the University of Arizona, Tucson Roadrunners and Tucson Sugar Skulls, if our 2020-21 budget allows.

Meanwhile, we will continue pursuing regional, national and international events that Pima County, Tucson and Oro Valley venues can accommodate and that bring visitors to metro Tucson.

Strategy 5

Grow sports room nights and sports-related economic impact by re-booking events that bring in sports delegates from outside Pima County, along with new events that fill area sports facilities, local hotels and resorts.

Tactics

- Sports: Work with Pima County, Tucson and Oro Valley to maintain existing sports events, while seeking new events that fill their facilities and attract visitors.
- Sports: Bring in sports event decision-makers with viable business to tour applicable facilities, along with hotels/resorts and off-site venues.
- Sports: Offer marketing and possibly financial assistance, if Visit Tucson's budget allows, to local event operators that stage annual sports events that fill area hotel/resort room nights.
- Sports: Pursue regional youth sports competitions because they took place with high participation rates during the Great Recession of 2008-10. Parents will spend on their kids' activities.
- Sports: Seek and book events into our sports facilities that will bring in participants within a six-hour drive and/or a two-hour, non-stop flight.
- Sports: Contact Major League Baseball (MLB) about bringing back the World Baseball Classic qualifying events to Kino Sports Complex once MLB activities resume.
- Sports: Pursue one-off sports opportunities that arise due to COVID-19 impacts.

**Visit Tucson’s 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan**  
**Updated: April 2020**

**Goal 1 (continued)**

Grow visitation to metro Tucson at levels commensurate with competitive cities once travel resumes.

**Overview—Goal 1, Strategy 6**

Film and television have a rich history in Tucson and Southern Arizona. Our Old West history, stunning Sonoran Desert scenery and venues such as Old Tucson Studios made our region a favorite of filmmakers and television producers for decades. While Arizona’s lack of film and television incentives have caused large, feature productions to move elsewhere, our Film Tucson team helps bring independent films, reality television episodes, commercials, print shoots and more to Southern Arizona with a cross.

Strategy 6

Work during the COVID-19 crisis to line up film and television projects that can begin production in Tucson and Southern Arizona once it is safe to proceed.

Tactics

- Film: Communicate proactively with film and television producers whose productions are shut down to promote Tucson’s and Southern Arizona’s attributes and services, including the short drive from Hollywood to Tucson.
- Film: Promote Modern Studios to producers seeking sound stages and studios once productions resume, while investigating whether Tucson Convention Center and other area venues could serve as studios as shows and movies are rushed back into production following COVID-19.
- Film and Sales: Determine whether a modified version of Visit Tucson’s master account incentive program for meetings could be developed as a film incentive. Meanwhile, learn the components of the most effective state film incentive programs.
- Film and Marketing: Continue refining our Film Tucson web page with current information about how Film Tucson can aid producers with crew, locations and permits.
- Film and Communications: Promote metro Tucson’s film festivals and partner with them to bring active filmmakers to Tucson.
- Film and Mexico Marketing: Pursue our “Film Without Borders” initiative collaborating with Sonora Film Office partners to assist with location scouting, accommodations and crew for projects taking place in Southern Arizona and the bordering Mexican state of Sonora.
- Film and Mexico Marketing: Coordinate with federal agencies to ease restrictions on crew and equipment and to expedite the U.S. Customs & Border Patrol process for cross-border projects.
- Film and Mexico Marketing: Provide connections to a network of Tucson-based production services and equipment providers that are pre-approved to work in Mexico for cross-border projects.
- Film: Following COVID-19, create a plan to deal with future pandemics.

## Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan

Updated: April 2020

### Goal 2

Work with local and regional government and business partners to help our community recover from COVID-19's medical and fiscal impacts.

#### Overview—Goal 2, Strategy 1

The health worries and financial devastation caused by COVID-19 are being felt in Tucson and throughout the world. Stay-at-home edicts, business closures, job losses and ongoing news regarding the virus's spread are causing health and financial fears in Tucson and Southern Arizona. We at Visit Tucson will work with our government partners and regional business leaders to help our region recover.

#### Strategy 1

Partner with Pima County, City of Tucson, Town of Oro Valley and the business community to help metro Tucson businesses survive the COVID-19 crisis.

#### Tactics

- Executive Staff, Marketing and Communications: Promote the Somos Uno/We Are One “crisis brand” created by Tucson Mayor Regina Romero and her team, Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, Tucson Metro Chamber and the business community to provide financial assistance and hope to residents and business operators during the COVID-19 crisis and as recovery ensues.
- Executive Staff: Confer with Tucson Business Alliance (TBA) partners, as needed during the crisis, to determine areas where the business community can collaborate with local and regional government. TBA partners include: Southern Arizona Home Builders Association; Southern Arizona Leadership Council; Sun Corridor Inc.; Tucson Association of Realtors; Tucson Hispanic Chamber; Tucson Metro Chamber; and Visit Tucson.
- Executive Staff: Participate in strategic conversations among government officials and private-sector businesses seeking solutions for keeping Tucson businesses operating during and after the COVID-19 crisis.
- Marketing, Communications and Mexico Marketing: Communicate the COVID-19 resources available to residents and businesses via Visit Tucson's communications tools.
- Executive Staff: Work with area sports organizations seeking solutions to help them continue operating after the COVID-19 crisis subsides.
- Marketing and Communications: Use and send Zoom backdrops of beautiful Tucson and Southern Arizona scenery to our stakeholders. Their use of the backdrops promotes our region to virtual meeting attendees throughout the world.

## Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan

Updated: April 2020

### Goal 2 (continued)

Work with local and regional government and business partners to help our community recover from COVID-19's medical and fiscal impacts.

### Overview—Goal 2, Strategy 2

One area in which metro Tucson was ill-prepared for the COVID-19 crisis was having temporary housing in place for first responders, healthcare workers, those in quarantine and for COVID-19 patients once hospitals were filled to capacity. Visit Tucson, government and community partners responded quickly when a small crisis emerged, but the limited need for additional housing masked the issue that our region is not prepared currently to handle a larger volume of pandemic patients and workers.

### Strategy 2

Work with local and county government officials, area hotels and resorts, and the healthcare community to house temporarily those impacted by COVID-19.

### Tactics

- Sales and Services: Build a list of metro Tucson hotels and resorts, along with property contacts and contact information, that lists their willingness to help different segments of workers and patients impacted by COVID-19. Share that information with decision-makers who need to find participating hotels and resorts immediately when emergencies arise.
- Executive Staff: Encourage metro Tucson hotels and resorts to register with the American Hotel & Lodging Association's Hospitality for Hope program, which was created to match government officials, first responders and medical authorities throughout the nation with hotels and resorts that can help.
- Executive Staff: Identify facilities outside hotels and resorts, such as University of Arizona dormitories and facilities and the Tucson Convention Center, that could be converted to COVID-19 emergency housing when needed and encourage those facility operators to take part, if needed.
- Executive Staff: Once COVID-19 subsides seek a meeting with regional/state emergency personnel to discuss best practices and contact organizations should a pandemic return.

## Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan

Updated: April 2020

### Goal 2 (continued)

Work with local and regional government and business partners to help our community recover from COVID-19's medical and fiscal impacts.

### Overview—Goal 2, Strategy 3

Tourism throughout the world shut down during the pandemic. The industry employs 25,000 Pima County residents and generates \$2.5 billion in direct visitor spending annually. Hotels, resorts, restaurants, bars, attractions, events, and transportation and tour companies are just some of the local businesses who lost their customers and revenue overnight in mid-March 2020.

### Strategy 3

Help tourism-related businesses in Tucson and Southern Arizona survive COVID-19's devastating financial impacts.

### Tactics

- Partnership/Visitor Services and All Departments: Call/contact all 400+ Visit Tucson partner businesses in late March/early April 2020 to see how they are doing and how Visit Tucson can assist them in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Partnership/Visitor Services: Provide all 400+ Visit Tucson partner businesses with six months of free partnership dues to give them a financial break when they need it the most.
- Communications, Marketing and Partnership/Visitor Services: Stage "how-to" classes/webinars to help partners market their businesses with topics that could include, but are not limited to: 1) how to develop a presence on LinkedIn; 2) how to conduct an effective \$50 Facebook campaign; 3) how to write and distribute effectively a press release targeting local media; and more.
- Executive Staff, Marketing, Communications and Partnership/Visitor Services: Support virtual programming created by Tucson and Southern Arizona science, environment and education facilities, while these facilities are closed due to the pandemic.
- Executive Staff, Marketing and Communications: Partner with the Tucson Metro Chamber, Sun Corridor Inc., Southern Arizona Leadership Council, Community Foundation for Southern Arizona and other metro Tucson business groups to develop and communicate COVID-19 resources and financial recovery programs.
- Partnership/Visitor Services: Continue executing our very successful Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) program via in-person training, when safe to do so, while also developing an online training program in 2020-21. Creating a growing community of CTAs enhances visitors' experiences.
- Partnership/Visitor Services: Reopen the Southern Arizona Heritage & Visitor Center, in partnership with Pima County, when it's safe to do so and push customers to local businesses.
- All Departments: Execute all tactics listed under Goal 1. Driving business helps all Visit Tucson partners and other tourism-related companies.

## Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan

Updated: April 2020

### Goal 2 (continued)

Work with local and regional government and business partners to help our community recover from COVID-19's medical and fiscal impacts.

### Overview—Goal 2, Strategy 4

Thousands of Pima County tourism industry workers lost their jobs or were impacted financially by the crisis in March and April 2020 with no immediate end in sight. We are communicating online job sites and opportunities through our website and supporting initiatives to provide money and assistance to area tourism businesses and their displaced employees.

### Strategy 4

Connect tourism and hospitality workers who became unemployed or underemployed during the COVID-19 crisis with new employment opportunities.

### Tactics

- Executive Staff: Communicate job leads to Visit Tucson staff whose jobs were eliminated or otherwise impacted by COVID-19.
- Executive Staff and Marketing: Create a "Jobs" section on the [COVID-19](#) page of Visit Tucson's website with links to numerous local and state job openings.
- Executive Staff and Marketing: Follow the Tucson Metro Chamber's lead by promoting jobs available through Pipeline Arizona. Pipeline Arizona matches Arizona companies with job seekers who have the skill sets sought those companies.
- Executive Staff and Marketing: Direct Pima County tourism and hospitality workers impacted by COVID-19 to Arizona tourism jobs promoted on the Arizona Office of Tourism's web page at [www.aztourismjobs.com](http://www.aztourismjobs.com) and to available jobs at [Pima County](#).

## Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan

Updated: April 2020

### Goal 3

Reshape Visit Tucson's operation, as needed, to maximize its 2020-21 impacts, while positioning metro Tucson's tourism industry and Visit Tucson for recovery in 2021-22.

#### Overview—Goal 3, Strategy 1

Understanding that Visit Tucson's 2020-21 budget is likely to drop to \$7 million or less in 2020-21 from \$10.2 million in 2019-20, invest only in initiatives that are most likely to attract travelers and their dollars to Tucson and Southern Arizona.

#### Strategy 1

Reduce our payroll and programming, as needed, to fit within our 2020-21 budgeted revenue, while focusing on the core functions of marketing, selling and promoting Tucson and Southern Arizona to customers most likely to visit during the next year.

#### Tactics

- Executive Staff: Reduce 2019-20 and 2020-21 payroll to fit COVID-19-related revenue drops in those fiscal years. Implement some combination of position eliminations, furloughs, wage and hiring freezes, 2019-20 fiscal year end performance bonus eliminations, salary reductions and employee benefits reductions.
- All Departments: Cross-train staff in different areas to ensure they can contribute where needed based on evolving priorities and current and future employee attrition.
- Executive Staff: Budget for assistance from freelancers and outside companies to help us in areas where we no longer have needed expertise and/or capacity.
- Executive Staff: Determine which Visit Tucson functions and programs need to be scaled back or eliminated temporarily to focus available revenue into marketing, selling and promoting our region in the coming year.

**Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan**  
**Updated: April 2020**

**Goal 3 (continued)**

Reshape Visit Tucson's operation, as needed, to maximize its 2020-21 impacts, while positioning metro Tucson's tourism industry and Visit Tucson for recovery in 2021-22.

**Overview—Goal 3, Strategy 2**

The U.S. Travel Association estimates that our nation's travel industry lost an estimated 5.9 million jobs by the end of April 2020, while U.S. gross domestic product and tax revenue will decline by \$502 billion and \$62 billion, respectively, in 2020 due to COVID-19 impacts. Tucson's travel industry is suffering, along with our counterparts throughout the world. Once it's safe to travel, though, it is vital that we have revenue available to compete for visitors.

Strategy 2

Pursue new Visit Tucson revenue sources in 2020-21 to offset the loss of bed-tax money from the organization's government partners.

Tactics

- Executive Staff: Investigate federal CARES Act programs to determine COVID-19-relief programs from which 501(c)(6) destination marketing organizations, such as Visit Tucson, can benefit.
- Executive Staff: Partner with the U.S. Travel Association, Destinations International and other allies to pursue federal relief for 501(c)(6) organizations via revisions to phase 3 of the CARES Act.
- Executive Staff: Work with the Arizona Lodging & Tourism Association to secure as much Arizona legislative funding as possible for the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT) in 2020-21. AOT's marketing attracts visitors to all regions of our state, plus its cooperative programs lessen Visit Tucson's investment to reach targeted customers.
- Executive Staff: Pursue the passage of Arizona Senate Bill 1335 in the 2020 legislative session. SB1335, which was approved by the Senate and assigned to the House Commerce Committee in March 2020 before the Arizona legislature recessed due to COVID-19, would enable the creation of tourism marketing authorities (TMAs) throughout the state. TMAs allow hoteliers to add a surcharge to sold hotel rooms with all revenue coming back to local destination marketing organizations to market, sell and promote their jurisdictions to visitors. Visit Tucson and AzLTA have asked legislative leadership to pass this bill once the 2020 session resumes. It serves as a COVID-19 relief bill for Arizona cities and towns, while costing the state nothing. Additionally, the state will receive tax revenue from visitors who travel to Arizona in response to SB1335-related marketing, sales and promotional programs.

**Visit Tucson's 2020-21 Tourism Recovery Plan**  
**Updated: April 2020**

**Goal 3 (continued)**

Reshape Visit Tucson's operation, as needed, to maximize its 2020-21 impacts, while positioning metro Tucson's tourism industry and Visit Tucson for recovery in 2021-22.

**Overview—Goal 3, Strategy 3**

Visit Tucson invested more than \$700,000 in local and regional events in 2019-20. Some of those event sponsorships helped fill metro Tucson hotels and resorts and/or provided the region with national exposure. Several sponsorships, however, were for events that primarily served area residents. Many local events make Tucson a better place to live and visit, but, with a substantially lower budget in 2020-21, we need to eliminate event investments that do not deliver visitors and their revenue to metro Tucson.

Strategy 3

Reduce local event sponsorships and focus remaining investments in events that attract visitors, fill lodging room nights and provide national exposure for Tucson.

Tactics

- Executive Staff: Work with our government partners to determine Visit Tucson's funding commitments to local events in 2020-21.
- Executive Staff: Create and implement an event funding application process for local events to help Visit Tucson evaluate and fund, to the extent possible, events that are attracting visitors to Tucson and Southern Arizona.
- Executive Staff: Find, create or develop an event that can be implemented in 2021-22 that can grow over time during our shoulder or off-seasons to attract visitors to the region.
- Executive Staff and Sports: Work with Pima County to determine the scope and timing of phase 2 of the southern portion of Kino Sports Complex, along with when a tunnel will be built under Interstate 10 connecting the southern portion of Kino with the remainder of the complex.
- Executive Staff and Sports: Work with the City of Tucson to consider additional parks and recreation enhancements that can be planned in 2020-21 and possibly funded in 2021-22 should budgets allow.
- Executive Staff and Sports: Work with the Town of Oro Valley to determine the Town's 2020-21 and 2021-22 event objectives and partner with the Town to make them happen.