



Visit
Tallahassee

FISCAL YEAR 2022-2026

TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN

for the Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee



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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

On behalf of the Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee team, I am proud to present the Fiscal Year 2022-2026 Tourism Strategic Plan in alignment with Leon County priorities, economic goals, community desires and tourism industry needs to grow the region's visitor economy and enhance the quality of life for our residents.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has threatened our way of life and severely impacted the travel and tourism industry over the last one and a half years. While it has been a time of great challenge and change in the industry, it has also been a time of great accomplishment. Leon County tourism will continue to rise and recover and this new strategic plan outlines some of the key pieces that will get us there. Instrumental to our success will be expanding existing collaborations and cultivating new partnerships with you, the tourism industry and community.

As you prepare for the future of your individual organization, we also need to think about our future collectively as a destination. Tourism is often referred to as the "first date" for economic development as tourism marketing creates a "halo effect" for the destination, driving not only visitation but lifting business development, real estate sales, and even college recruitment. The work of the Division is inextricably linked to local businesses, the community, and local government. We are honored by the opportunity to showcase Tallahassee/Leon County each and every day.

The Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee operates as the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) to advertise and market visitation to Florida's capital region. There is so much to celebrate in the destination: recent hotel development has increased room inventory by over 10%, sports tourism continues strong momentum, meetings and group sales are returning, and leisure travel is increasing with emphasis on trails and outdoor recreation. And there is also much to do in the years ahead.

We are an evolving destination. We are a creative destination. We are an innovative destination. We are a pretty and unexpected destination. But above all, we are a community.

KERRI L. POST, DIRECTOR
LEON COUNTY DIVISION OF TOURISM/VISIT TALLAHASSEE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEON COUNTY DIVISION OF TOURISM/ VISIT TALLAHASSEE

The Division of Tourism (Visit Tallahassee) promotes the Tallahassee – Leon County area through tourism advertising, public relations, direct sales, visitor service functions, and marketing research. The Division also provides staff support to the Tourist Development Council (TDC). The TDC, an eleven-member advisory council, with nine voting members per Florida Statute 125.0104: and two ad hoc, non-voting members, appointed by the Leon Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to make recommendations to the BOCC on matters pertaining to tourism marketing and expenditures of Tourist Development Tax revenue.

The Division's current Strategic Plan has provided guidance with goals and objectives for the last three years and the Plan for 2022-2026 outlines strategic direction for the coming five years. This document outlines a five-year vision for the Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee. The subsequent goals developed in this document are designed to power future discussions and actions of the Division of Tourism, Tourist Development Council (TDC), tourism industry stakeholders, and community/business leaders to create collaborative opportunities to enhance visitor spending in the region.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The strategic planning process for the development of the FY2022-2026 Tourism Strategic Plan for the Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee began in July 2021. The development of the Strategic Plan is postured within the framework of the mission and vision for the Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee. The Mission Statement for Visit Tallahassee provides the purpose for organizational existence which is **to enhance the region's economic growth and quality of life by collaboratively inspiring the vitality of Tallahassee's visitor economy.**

The vision statement for the Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee describes the future strategic priorities that align with its mission. The vision for the Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee is **for the Tallahassee Region to be recognized and appreciated as one of the most diverse and vibrant destinations in the Southeast.**

The **Process** included extensive outreach to guide the Strategic Plan's development with **more than 250 points of views registered** via an online community survey (162), interviews with community/business leaders (40), and conducting five public meetings (50) representing organizations and individuals from various interest groups across the spectrum of Tallahassee/Leon County.

This level of community input was critical in the TDC's ultimate decisions on its recommended path forward for this Strategic Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Division's goals and tactics are all aligned with the **Bold Goal** of generating **\$5 billion in economic impact** over the next 5 years **by implementing the Division of Tourism's Strategic Plan** and accomplishing four major Strategic Priorities outlined in the plan.

The **Strategic Priorities** are to:

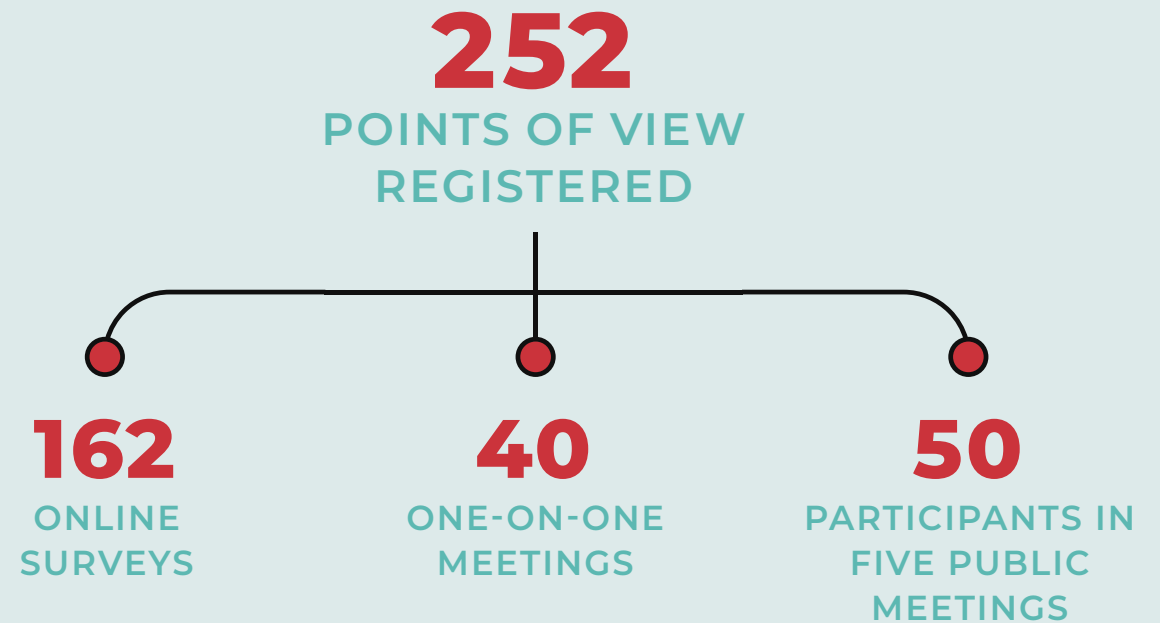
Strategic Priority 1.0: Increase the visitation to Tallahassee/Leon County through strategic marketing and sales by 3% annually.

Strategic Priority 2.0: Increase local awareness of the Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee and the overall impact on tourism in Tallahassee/Leon County.

Strategic Priority 3.0: Increase industry/community engagement and cultivate new partnerships to enhance destination development.

Strategic Priority 4.0: Increase visitor services in market to enhance the visitor experience and extend stays.

The Plan provides detailed information regarding the timeline, organizations represented and industry/public input data points. It also provides details for each of the Strategic Priorities with associated **5-Year Targets** for implementation. The specific tactics will be outlined in the Division of Tourism's annual Marketing and Sales Plans presented to the TDC and evaluated against the Bold Goal and Strategic Priorities each year.



FY 22-26 TOURISM BOLD GOAL, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, & 5-YEAR TARGETS

TOURISM BOLD GOAL Grow our tourism economy, its diversity, competitiveness, and economic impact by generating \$5 billion in economic impact over the next five (5) years.*

Strategic Priority 1.0

INCREASE THE VISITATION TO TALLAHASSEE/LEON COUNTY THROUGH STRATEGIC MARKETING AND SALES BY 3% ANNUALLY.

Strategic Goal 1.0: Sales Department (sports, meetings and conventions, leisure sales) to generate 275,000 room nights over the next five (5) years targeting high-profile and high-impact events.

Target 1.1.1: Sports Target : Attract 100 state, regional, or national championships across all sports over the next five (5) years.

Target 1.1.2: Meetings and Conventions Target: Attract 85 new meetings and conventions in the next five (5) years.

Target 1.1.3: Leisure Group Target: Attract 85 new leisure groups over the next five (5) years.

Target 1.1.4: Continue to build upon the reputation of Apalachee Regional Park as a destination venue for cross country athletes by securing state, regional, and national competitions.

Target 1.1.5: To further promote Leon County as a biking community, pursue the State’s “Trail Town” designation and continue to coordinate with the City, Blueprint, State, and U.S. Forest Service to leverage capital improvements in pursuit of the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) designation.

Strategic Goal 2.0: Marketing Department to develop and implement at least 15 new high-impact multi-media marketing, advertising, and promotional programs/campaigns on an annual basis.

Target 1.2.1: Provide technical assistance, financial and promotional support for the 2024 Bicentennial Committee and community activities.

Target 1.2.2: Expand the visibility and brand identity of outdoor recreation activities (cross country, 700+ miles of trails, mountain biking, birding, etc.).

Target 1.2.3: Expand the development of vertical marketing assets working with industry partners and subject matter experts.

Target 1.2.4: Increase positioning and promotion as a “Get-Away” destination by producing seasonal itineraries/programming by target audiences (families, couples, millennials, etc.).

*To be reviewed on an annual basis

Target 1.2.5: Amplify the promotion of the emerging culinary/brewery scene.

Target 1.2.6: Expand the promotion of arts/culture and history/heritage sites.

Strategic Goal 3.0: Host 100,000 residents and visitors as part of the County Amphitheater Concert Series over the next five (5) years.

Target 1.3.1: Increase annual concert budget and target a wide variety of artists/acts, and increase advance bookings.

Target 1.3.2: Create additional partnerships with local organizations producing concert series – i.e., Tallahassee Downtown Improvement Authority Sundown Concert Series, Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, Florida State University Opening Nights.

Strategic Priority 2.0

INCREASE LOCAL AWARENESS OF *THE DIVISION OF TOURISM/VISIT TALLAHASSEE* AND THE VALUE OF TOURISM IN TALLAHASSEE/LEON COUNTY.

Strategic Goal 2.0: Identify a minimum of 20 opportunities per year to create collaborative partnerships to increase local awareness of the role of the Division and economic impact of tourism in Tallahassee.

Target 2.2.1: Division staff to present to at least five (5) community groups annually (Rotary, Chambers of Commerce, Leadership Tallahassee, etc.)

Target 2.2.2: Generate at least 20 articles/stories in local media outlets annually.

Target 2.2.3: Implement National Travel & Tourism Week program annually promoting the local economic impact and the quality of life benefits of tourism.

Target 2.2.4: Conduct a resident/business education campaign annually promoting awareness of major events such as cross-country events.

Target 2.2.5: Develop an annual resident marketing campaign to encourage exploring different activities and learn more about Tallahassee assets in the community and explore the development of a local “Tourism Ambassador” program.

Target 2.2.6: Conduct at least two (2) Tourism industry education programs annually to provide industry information/resources, promote collaboration and share trends/best practices in the industry.

Strategic Priority 3.0

INCREASE INDUSTRY/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CULTIVATE NEW PARTNERSHIPS TO ENHANCE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT.

Strategic Goal 3.0: Increase outreach and engagement by cultivating a minimum of 10 new or expanded program partnerships and collaborations annually throughout all sectors of Leon County.

Target 3.3.1: Expand support for at least five (5) marketing partnerships and programming (i.e., restaurants, events, etc.) annually

Target 3.3.2: Conduct at least two (2) tourism industry meetings annually by targeted industry sector (i.e., short-term rentals (such as AirBnB), Uber drivers, the running community, etc.) and/or within the entertainment districts.

Target 3.3.3: Establish at least ten (10) new or expanded Sport partnerships and collaborations with event rights-holders, boards, and colleges/universities.

Target 3.3.4: Establish at least five (5) new or expanded Meetings and Leisure Groups partnerships and collaborations with the airport, colleges/universities, and/or hotels, etc.

Target 3.3.5: Continue engagement and collaboration with at least two (2) community partners/agencies annually that have a shared interest in destination development (such as Office of Economic Vitality, Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency, Chambers of Commerce, Council on Culture and Arts, Tallahassee International Airport, Downtown Improvement Authority, etc.).

Target 3.3.6: Expand annual co-op marketing and advertising opportunities offered to the industry to leverage resources and generate additional partner exposure.

Target 3.3.7: Revisit collaboration and partnership with the Florida Department of State on site enhancement and promotional opportunities for the national historic DeSoto Encampment Site as America's First Christmas.

Target 3.3.8: Continue to focus TDT funding on programs/activities that generate the greatest ROI for Tallahassee/Leon County.

Target 3.3.9: Expand frequency to bi-annual Regional Tourism Meetings with DMOs in surrounding areas.

Target 3.3.10: Support 900 of community events, sporting competitions, festivals, performances, and cultural programming that will attract visitors and residents.

Strategic Priority 4.0

INCREASE VISITOR SERVICES IN MARKET TO ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND EXTEND STAYS.

Strategic Goal 4.0: Increase visitor services through various diversifications and collaborations with other government entities and community organizations.

Target 4.4.1: Continue to explore future opportunities to establish a visitor center presence in the Market Street District or other locations to attract/serve visitors from I-10.

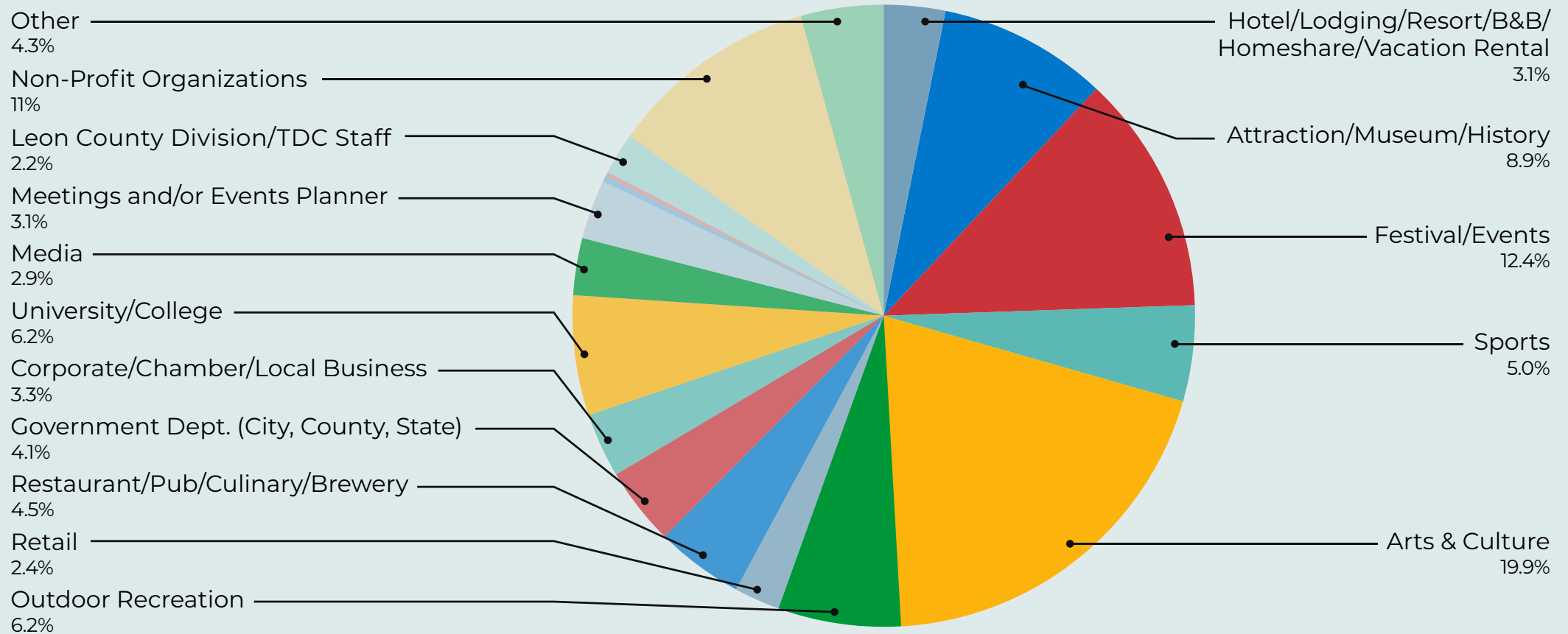
Target 4.4.2: Develop and implement a quarterly featured industry partner opportunity at the Visitor Information Center and Gift Shop at Cascades and at the historic Amtrak building beginning Summer 2023.

Target 4.4.3: Expand and diversify local product offerings by featuring new local items and/or vendors annually in the gift shop(s) at Visitor Information Center(s).

Target 4.4.4: Continue working with community planning agencies to implement destination way-finding signage (as budget allows) from the airport, downtown and key sites around the community.

Target 4.4.5: Provide enhanced visitor information services to lodging partners (hotels and short-term rentals) utilizing both innovative and traditional methods such as QR codes to website/app/events, tear-off way-finding maps and the “What’s Happening” flier.





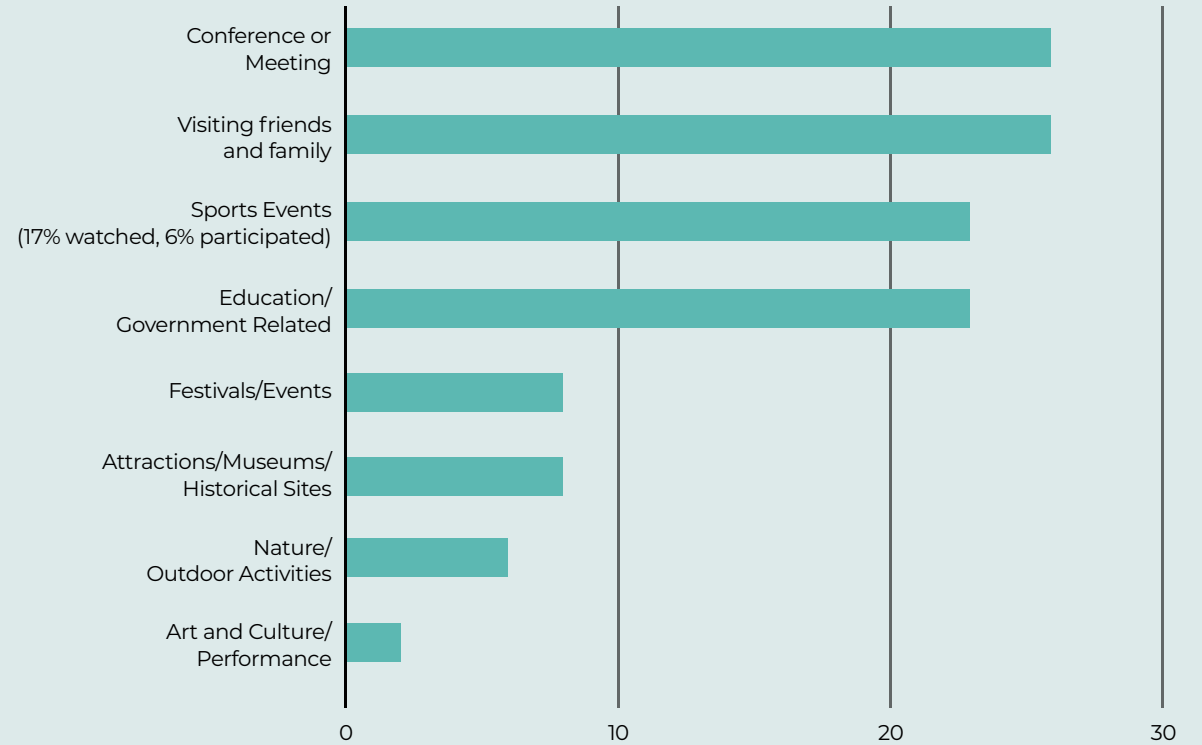
***Additionally, another 90 viewpoints were gained through one-on-one interviews and public meetings of TDC staff members, city and county leaders, and community members.**

TOP REASONS VISITORS COME TO TALLAHASSEE/LEON COUNTY:

PERCEIVED RESULTS BASED ON ONLINE SURVEY



(ACTUAL) REASONS FOR VISITING IN FY19



*Source: Downs & St. Germain Research, FY2019 Economic Impact & Visitor Tracking Report

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

STRENGTHS AS A VISITOR DESTINATION

- Scenic beauty, outdoor recreation, trails, parks
- Universities/education-related
- Sports (watch and participate)
- State Capital/Government
- Sense of community, small-town, friendly people
- Variety of arts and culture activities
- Good Restaurants/Dining
- Year-round events

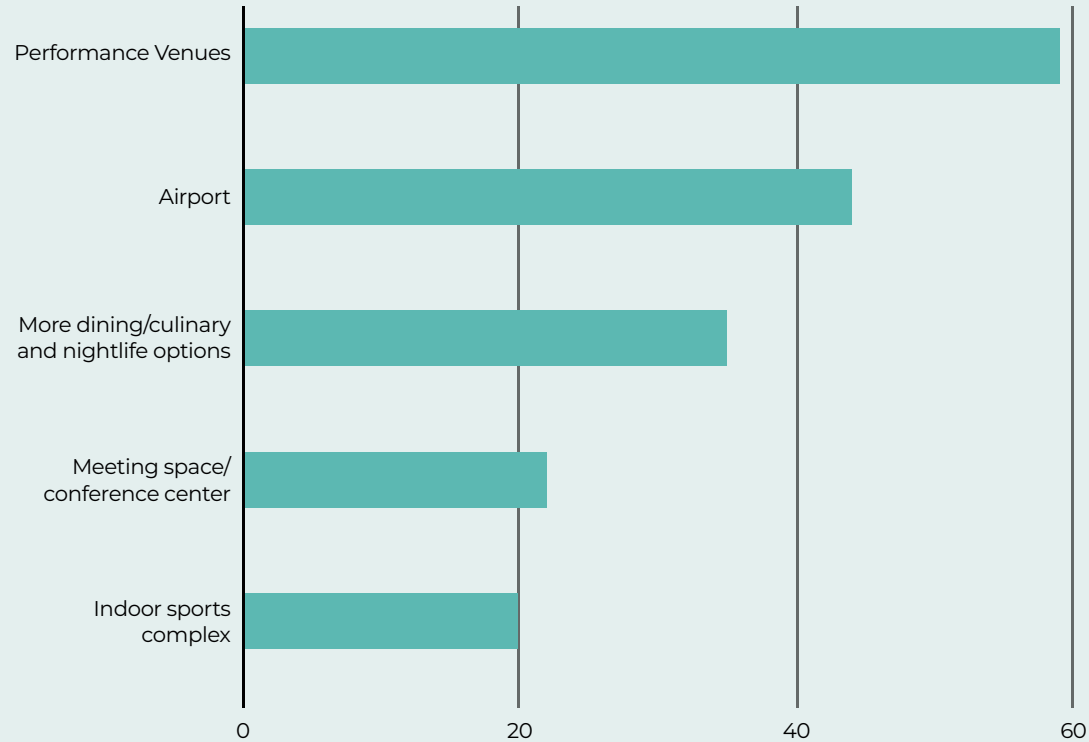
WEAKNESSES AS A VISITOR DESTINATION

- Airport - High cost and limited flights
- Difficult destination to get to
- Lacking conference/meeting space, event spaces, and performance venues
- Lack of number and variety of entertainment options (cultural, shopping, attractions, music, etc.)
- Resident perception there is not much to do here
- COVID-19 is impacting travel/visitation/businesses/budgets
- Public awareness of crime/negative media
- No big year-round attractions, no national sports team
- Competition from larger markets with more offerings
- Focus the use of TDT funding on activities that generate the greatest ROI

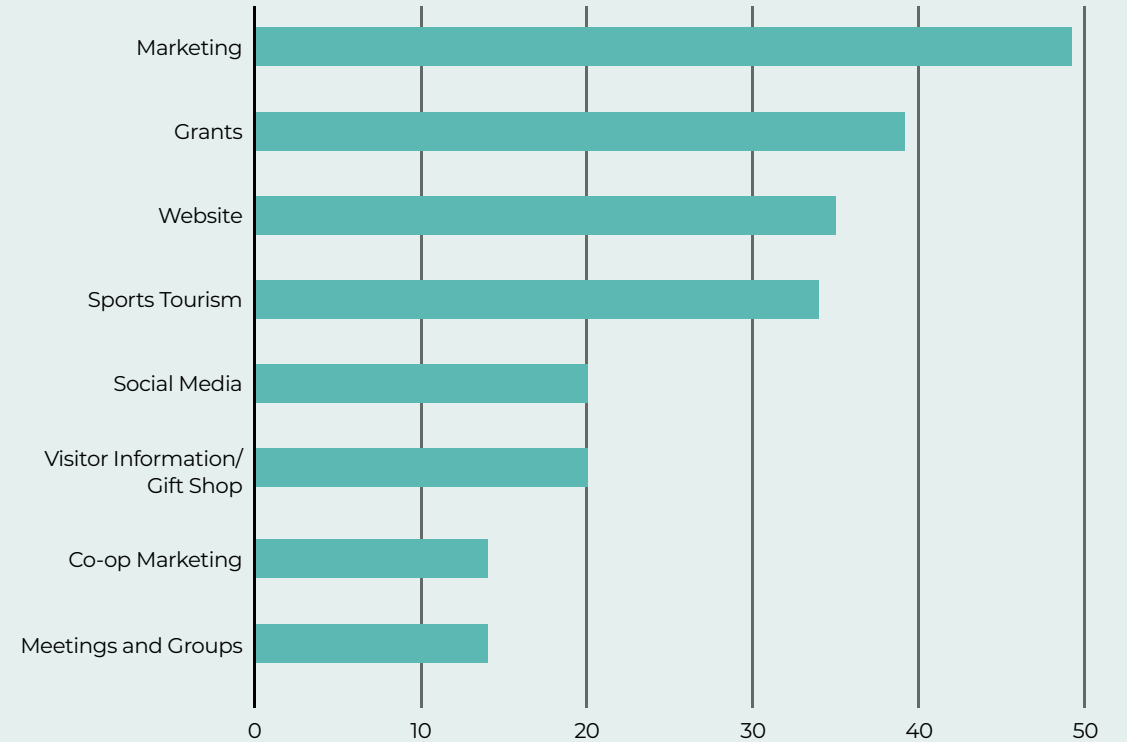


STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

TOP FIVE THINGS THAT COULD BE BUILT OR ENHANCED TO DRAW MORE VISITORS



EIGHT PRIMARY STRENGTHS OF THE LEON COUNTY DIVISION OF TOURISM/VISIT TALLAHASSEE



MARKETING INITIATIVES TO INCREASE TOURISM IN TALLAHASSEE/LEON COUNTY

- Increase marketing and promotions
- More use of video and social media
- Utilize vibrant, upbeat marketing, be more fun, use both trendy and traditional media
- More use of QR codes (and for use at hotels)
- Educate locals, FAM trips for locals
- More collaborations and partnerships with colleges/ universities, running community and other local organizations
- Establish a Visitor Center off I-10 to help capture interstate traffic
- Put DEI at the forefront
- Promote outdoor recreation, trails, mountain biking, parks, greenways
- More focus on history, all history
- Stop comparing ourselves to others, need more self-esteem, we are a destination
- Produce seasonal itineraries and “Best of” itineraries/brochures by an audience (i.e. family)
- Offer more co-op advertising
- Use Doak Campbell for more concerts and events
- Dynamic billboards
- Focus on “Get-a-ways” and quick trips
- More advertorials
- Expand partnership with Tallahassee Foodies
- Create a brewery passport
- Have more concerts with diverse music acts
- Present a “This Weekend” communication to stay an extra day
- Develop Sports tours of “must-see” sites for Rattler/Nole fans
- Develop and market DeSoto Encampment site/First Christmas
- More sports events, more mountain biking
- Develop local ambassadors/influencers, better educate residents
- Focus regionally
- Focus on arts and culture
- Target millennials

THANK YOU!

