IT HAS BEEN A TRULY REMARKABLE YEAR FOR THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY IN OUR REGION. With $8 billion of investment bringing new hotels, businesses, venues and entertainment destinations to our already robust tourism infrastructure, we are truly at a tipping point that is being noticed by travel experts from around the globe. From the success of hosting the 100th PGA Championship in August of 2018 to the extensive and sustained press about our international food scene, our momentum is palpable, and there is an infectious enthusiasm growing throughout the community. That energy was on full display this summer as we hosted Destinations International’s 2019 Annual Convention, as our travel and tourism colleagues witnessed firsthand the transformation taking place in our community.

Our marketing team’s initiatives continue to bring acclaim as well, as our “In the Know” ad campaign featuring Sterling K. Brown earned a ‘Best In Show’ award, as well as Platinum and Gold marketing awards during the 62nd annual HSMAI Adrian Awards, the largest and most prestigious global travel marketing competition. The campaign, which features celebrities who are proud to call St. Louis home now also includes spots with John Goodman, Andy Cohen, Jackie Joyner-Kersee, Jennifer Lewis, Becky Sauerbrunn and very soon, Jenna Fischer.

Most importantly, we’ve secured legislative support from St. Louis City and St. Louis County officials for the critical improvements to the America’s Center Convention Complex to ensure we remain viable in competing with other popular convention cities. We’re now focused on finalizing cooperation agreements and financing, and will then expeditiously commence the architectural and construction phases of the project.

Our meetings sales team secured 328 conventions/meetings in fiscal year 2019. Leisure group sales booked 560 leisure travel groups. These 888 groups, combined, committed to 543,826 room nights for attendees arriving between 2019 and 2030. But there is still work to be done. We are taking aggressive steps within our sales organization and working closely with our hotel partners to address the occupancy numbers presented on the adjacent graphs. Among those efforts include finding new opportunities to book events at The Dome including the sold-out Garth Brooks concert March 2019 and the debut of the XFL’s St. Louis BattleHawks in February 2020.

Unlike leisure travel visitors who choose to come to St. Louis, our meeting and event attendees are invited here by their associations and organizations. Four times a year we take the opportunity to ask them about their experiences, and I’m pleased to report that nearly nine in ten tell us their experience in St. Louis was “very good” or “excellent.” That is truly a credit to you, the people of our region’s hospitality community. Your warmth, inclusiveness and commitment to world-class customer service is truly our “secret sauce” making St. Louis a destination of choice.

As always, we thank you for your continued support and friendship. Great things are happening in our community, and we look forward to partnering with you in bringing even more successes to our region’s vibrant and growing travel and tourism industry.

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Ratcliffe, President
ST. LOUIS IS WELL POSITIONED TO RESPOND TO THE LEISURE SEGMENT BY PROVIDING AN ABUNDANCE OF FREE WORLD-CLASS ATTRACTIONS, VAST SHOPPING AND DINING OFFERINGS AND AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATIONS.

Seasonal Marketing Campaigns

Creating a year-round presence in target markets, Explore St. Louis conducted seasonal advertising campaigns utilizing television, radio and digital media.

The award-winning “In the Know” ad campaign which launched in FY18 featuring Sterling K. Brown had some new St. Louis celebrities join the cast in FY19. New spots featuring John Goodman, Andy Cohen and Jackie Joyner-Kersee were added to the arsenal with even more celebrities booked for future appearances. The campaign consists of thirty second television spots and a variety of digital ads in which the celebrity tells the viewer something they might know about St. Louis and then something they may not know. The spots are engaging, fun and resonate extremely well with visitors.

The spring and summer advertising campaigns ran in the following markets: Champaign/Springfield/Decatur; Chicago, Peoria/Bloomington, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Louisville, Memphis, Quad Cities and Springfield, MO. Media consisted of television (spot and cable) and digital media (ad networks, Facebook, Brightroll and YouTube and Trip Advisor). Ads on the Cardinals Radio Network and Fox Sports Midwest helped to extend our message to over 100 additional markets.

To further leverage the seasonal campaigns, Explore St. Louis conducted promotions in Memphis (Memphis in May Beale Street Music Festival) and Chicago (Chicago Blues Festival). At all of the events, visitors to the St. Louis booth were given Official St. Louis Visitors Guides, kid’s activity books, St. Louis koozies and registered to win a weekend getaway to St. Louis. Local outreach events included Be A Tourist In Your Own Town, the Festival of Lights, Thanksgiving Day Parade, and America’s Birthday Parade.

In addition to the fall, holiday and spring/summer campaigns, highly targeted campaigns reaching the African American, Hispanic and LGBTQIA audiences ran as well in the same markets. These campaigns featured Sterling K. Brown, Andy Cohen and Jackie Joyner-Kersee.
In addition to broadcast and digital advertising plans, an extensive social media strategy was employed to engage visitors. Several video series such as FEAST on St. Louis, Neighborhood Spotlight, Hear This Week and Meet Me Outdoors helped to show visitors some of the ways they can experience St. Louis. Blogs, contests and the activities on STL.Live social channels provided record visitor engagement levels for the year.

Based on the advertising impact and effectiveness study conducted by an independent market research organization, the campaigns achieved the following results:

- More than 600,000 incremental trips were made to St. Louis, with visitor spending of over $600 million.
- Explorestlouis.com hosted 6.1 million visits

Social Media
The Explore St. Louis social media accounts also continued to have significant increases in followers on Facebook at 184,240 (gained over 72,000), Twitter at 65,626 (gained over 3,300) and Instagram at 56,715 (gained over 14,800). Social media content campaigns led to a 13% year over year increase in website traffic from the Explore St. Louis social media pages. Social media campaigns also reached 7% more new users compared to FY18.

Leisure Travel Sales Department
The Leisure Travel Sales Department (LTS), participated in multiple events this year, including: Student & Youth Travel Association; Receptive Tour Operator Summit – East & South; World Travel Market; National Tour Association; Travel South International and Domestic; American Bus Association; International Inbound Travel Association; Select Travel; Heartland Showcase; ITB; NTA’s CONTACT; International Gay Lesbian Travel Association; US Travels – IPW; Military Reunion Network and Missouri Group Travel Show. The LTS department also hosted the following familiarization tours (FAM): LTS Tour Operator FAM, World Strides FAM, Brand USA French FAM and Bon Voyage FAM. The team also participated in sales calls to Chicago, London and Los Angeles.

The LTS department takes point for the St. Louis Film Office, resulting in the department assisting on more than 65 productions ranging from short films to reality TV Shows with locations, permits and general information. The Film Office also participated in the 11th Annual LA and NY Meet Up with the Missouri Film Office and attended the Association of Film Commissioners International Cineposium.

A number of travel planners conducted site visits throughout the year. The room night goal of 22,000 was exceeded with 22,138 booked rooms with more than 465 trade show appointments booked with travel planners.

ROI GENERATED FOR EVERY $1 INVESTED IN LEISURE COMMUNICATIONS

$331
**Meetings & Conventions**

The Explore St. Louis Sales Team booked 328 conventions/meetings for a total of 521,688 room nights, or 87% of the fiscal goal. The long-term goal was exceeded for groups booking 2022 and beyond by a whopping 125%, while the short-term and mid-term period booking fell short of goal at 61 and 62% respectively. A sampling of some of the largest bookings appear below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Room Nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholics Anonymous</td>
<td>July 2030</td>
<td>52,200 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Pentecostal Church International</td>
<td>July 2023</td>
<td>39,600 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitol Sports, Mideast Volleyball Qualifier</td>
<td>March 2026, 2027, 2028</td>
<td>30,780 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitol Sports, Presidents Weekend Tournament</td>
<td>February 2026, 2027, 2028</td>
<td>30,210 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitol Sports, Dennis Lafata Gateway Bid Classic</td>
<td>February 2026, 2027, 2028</td>
<td>25,290 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States GeoSpatial Intelligence Foundation</td>
<td>May 2023, 2025</td>
<td>22,275 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Team Development (LTD)</td>
<td>September 2020, October 2021, 2022</td>
<td>16,500 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bands of America</td>
<td>October 2023, 2024, 2025</td>
<td>13,500 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dot Foods, Inc.</td>
<td>April 2021, 2022, 2023</td>
<td>13,368 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Youth Soccer</td>
<td>June 2021</td>
<td>11,850 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.</td>
<td>September 2023</td>
<td>11,825 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education User Group</td>
<td>February 2023</td>
<td>11,040 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Society of Military Comptrollers</td>
<td>May 2023</td>
<td>10,976 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Public Works Association</td>
<td>August 2021</td>
<td>8,750 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Professionals International</td>
<td>June 2023</td>
<td>7,840 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Workers of America</td>
<td>July 2023</td>
<td>7,280 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Hockey League</td>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td>6,960 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA Gymnastics</td>
<td>June 2020</td>
<td>5,350 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis Scott Gallagher</td>
<td>November 2019</td>
<td>5,324 room nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodard Events, LLC</td>
<td>June 2020</td>
<td>5,250 room nights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following are highlights of the sales team's segmentation strategy for the past fiscal year.

**Association & Government**
The association market confirmed 138 association events, representing 162,103 room nights. A sampling of these include: Alcoholics Anonymous, Higher Education User Group, American Public Works Association, and Meeting Professionals International. The government market confirmed 28 government events, representing 52,255 room nights. A sampling of these include United States GeoSpatial Intelligence Foundation, the Missouri Office of State Courts, and United States Department of Defense.

**Corporate**
Corporate and tradeshow events continue to present great opportunity for St. Louis. Dot Foods, Inc. extended their stay in St. Louis (2021, 2022, and 2023) with their Innovations meeting. Both Salon Centric and Stifel continue to book their annual meeting at the America’s Center. In addition, Direct Selling organization Leadership Team Development booked St. Louis for 2022, 21 and 22 for the first time since 2008. In all, corporate bookings represented 87 bookings, totaling 78,370 room nights.

**Sports**
In fiscal 2019, Capitol Sports confirmed nine more volleyball events for America’s Center and St. Louis in 2026-2028. The Mideast Qualifier and President’s Day Weekend continue to generate significant demand, and with the recent addition of the Dennis Lafata Gateway Bid Classic in February, the demand will increase even more. In addition, USA Fencing will return to St. Louis in April 2020 with the Division I National Championships. Other groups extending their events include St. Louis Scott Gallagher (through 2019) and Bands of America/Music For All (2023, 2024, and 2025). Overall, sports bookings represented 42 events totaling 155,060 room nights.

**Religious & Multicultural**
St. Louis has been successful with the religious market due, in part, to The Dome at America’s Center. The United Pentecostal Church International again selected St. Louis to host their Youth Congress. This event will bring an estimated 20,000-plus young adults to St. Louis, utilizing 39,600 room nights. In addition, the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc. will host their September 2023 convention at the America’s Center. With 20,000 attendees they will use 11,825 room nights. In total, this market represented 30 events totaling 72,710 room nights.

**New Dome Events**
As an added highlight, the team secured the Garth Brooks Stadium Tour for March 9, 2019. In addition, the XFL made a December announcement that St. Louis and The Dome had secured a team for the 2020 launch of the league.
IT WAS ANOTHER NOTABLE YEAR FOR EXPLORE ST. LOUIS’ PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS, highlighted by continued coverage of the re-opening of the transformed Gateway Arch grounds, the 100th anniversary of the PGA Championship at Bellerive Country Club, the St. Louis Blues’ run for the Stanley Cup and continued national acclaim for St. Louis’ burgeoning food scene.

Explore St. Louis garnered earned media placements on numerous stories in meeting and convention industry publications, mainstream national outlets, and key regional media markets. In total, these efforts generated 1,145 positive stories/mentions, with an earned media circulation of more than 510 million. The team assisted in hosting a record 106 journalists, bloggers, and influencers who shared their St. Louis experiences with their various audiences. The team also executed the annual ‘Be a Tourist in Your Own Town Trade Show’ on April 24 and the Explore St. Louis High School Culinary Cook-off event on April 12 at St. Louis Community College – Forest Park.

Some of the outlets that provided coverage of St. Louis region included:

AAA Midwest Traveler  Forbes
ABC News  FOX News
CBS Sports  Frommer’s
Chicago Parent  Golf Channel
Chicago Tribune  Group Travel Leader
CNN Travel  Huffington Post
Condé Nast Traveler  Livability
Country Living  Lonely Planet
Daily Meal  Meetings Today
Dallas Morning News  Midwest Living
Delta Sky  New York Times
ESPN  National Geographic
Fodor’s Travel  NBC TODAY
Food & Wine  Open Table
Passport Magazine
PCMA Convene
Smart Meetings
Southwest: The Magazine
Successful Meetings
Thrillist
Travel Channel
Travel + Leisure
USA Today
Wall Street Journal
Washington Post
Yelp
over
1,000
POSITIVE STORIES

public relations
The Convention Services team hosted 51 planning visits for future groups to St. Louis during Fiscal Year 2019. The department attended six pre-promote events for these future conventions planned for 2020. The team also provided services to 1,184 groups of varying sizes – 29 of which were citywide groups.

Key groups hosted and provided with service during the fiscal year:
- Optavia;
- USA Fencing National Championships;
- National Information Solutions, Inc.;
- National Society for Histotechnology;
- Scott Gallagher Soccer;
- PGA Championships;
- Stifel Nicolaus;
- Sweet Adelines International;
- Church of God in Christ;
- Youth Ministry Collaborative;
- Capitol Sports;
- Missouri Valley Conference;
- National Association of County and City Health Officials;
- Trans World, LLC;
- American Oil Chemists Society;
- Dot Foods, Inc.;
- InterVarsity Christian Fellowship;
- United Methodist Church;
- American Institute of Steel Construction;
- National Science Teachers Association;
- American Optometric Association;
- Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks;
- The Society for Industrial Security Professionals;
- International Institute of Municipal Clerks;
- Destinations International;
- Travel South USA;
- Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis;
- The Council of State Governments;
- Lutheran Education Association;
- Entomological Society of America;
- American Association of Bovine Practitioners;
- Care Net;
- NAFSA – Association of International Educators;
- United Pentecostal Church International;
- Association of Computing Machinery;
- UPCI Youth Ministries;
- American Association of State High Transportation Officials;
- Seventh-day Adventists;
- Parents as Teachers;
- Insurance Accounting Systems Association;
- American Gear Manufacturers Association;
- Veterinary Emergency & Critical Care Society.

Visitor Services

At the very end of last fiscal year, Explore St. Louis joined the team at the brand new Gateway Arch National Park, moving our Visitor Center operation from the Old Courthouse. In Fiscal Year 2019, at the Gateway Arch alone, we tracked 271,165 visitor interactions, equaling more than our entire sum in Fiscal Year 2018.

During FY 2019, Visitor Services recorded 409,608 visitor interactions at America's Center, Forest Park, Gateway Arch and St. Louis Lambert International Airport. We realized a 115% increase over the previous year, thanks to the many thousands of visitors visiting the newly reopened Gateway Arch Visitor Center and Museum. During the year, we also saw gains in visitation at our Visitor Centers in Forest Park and St. Louis Airport.

Volunteers donated 12,588 service hours in FY 19, saving Explore St. Louis over $250,000 in payroll dollars.

In addition to staffing four Visitor Centers and greeting travelers at St. Louis Lambert International Airport, our team served a total of 73 meetings, conventions and special events during the year including 57 conventions and events at America’s Center. Our largest volunteer efforts this year came during Church of God in Christ with 350 volunteer hours served on behalf of the convention, followed by the Taylor Swift concert where 60 volunteers donated 300 hours distributing light up wristbands to concert goers. Additionally, groups like American Optometric Association, BPO Elks, InterVarsity, National Science Teachers, PGA Championship, Sweet Adelines and USA Fencing were among the highlights this year.

The Visitor Services team also provided volunteer support during a variety of festivals and events to benefit many local partners. Key groups included Forest Park Forever, Missouri History Museum, Missouri Valley Conference, Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis Christmas Carolers Association, St. Louis Lambert Airport, Saint Louis Science Center, the USO of Missouri and the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis.
EXPLORE ST. LOUIS IS GRATEFUL TO ALL AREA ST. LOUIS BUSINESSES that have stepped forward and supported our mission by renewing or becoming new partners. Through their participation, retention and revenue remain consistent.

Fiscal year 2019 kicked off with several of these extraordinary individuals being recognized for their commitment to the St. Louis region’s hospitality industry at the Explore St. Louis Annual Meeting in September at America’s Center. There, Explore St. Louis All Star Awards were presented to the organizations that supported the Reimagining of the Gateway Arch, and to local leaders who participated in the St. Louis Culinary Showcase, as well as, to the partnering businesses that joined with Explore St. Louis to host the 100th PGA Championship.

In addition, St. Louis’ exceptional frontline employees were honored for their service with 154 individuals recognized as Hospitality Heroes, and 7 as Super Heroes noted for their work that went above and beyond their daily duties to ensure the satisfaction of their clients and guests to the St. Louis community.

Explore St. Louis partners also had the opportunity to network at a number of events throughout the year – both educational and social – hosted by Challenger Learning Center, .Zack, Moto Museum, Forest Park Visitor Center, The Start Bar and No Way Out. “Enhancing the Visitor Experience” was the focus of partnership seminars. During the “St. Lou...is Live, On Tour!” seminar, Explore St. Louis partners and volunteers learned more about the unforgettable attractions that make St. Louis a must-see destination. Participants heard from representatives from Big Muddy Adventures, Gateway Arch Riverboats, Renegade STL, STL Haunted History Tours and Landmarks Downtown – St. Louis Walking Tours.

During the holiday season, Explore St. Louis partners were able to dress Build-A-Bears and write notes of comfort and good tidings for the patients of St. Louis Children’s Hospital.

In May, the National Travel & Tourism Week Celebration was held at Circus Flora under The Big Top in Grand Center with the inspiring theme, “Travel Matters” and was emcee’d by Jessica Hentoff of Circus Harmony. The event showcased how far the St. Louis travel industry has come. Attendees also learned more about current developments in the works, including those at Forest Park, the Missouri Botanical Garden, The Black Rep and the Grand Center Arts District.

The next generation of culinary artists were also recognized for their participation in the 12th Annual Explore St. Louis High School Culinary Cook-Off Competition, with students representing North Technical High School, South Technical High School and Beaumont High School. The celebration included a high flying performance by KO Duo of Hand to Acrobatic Art and Circus Harmony and a preview of the latest Explore St. Louis ‘In the Know’ commercial featuring John Goodman.
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www.explorestlouis.com

Explore St. Louis is the driving force behind St. Louis’ $5.8 billion convention and tourism industry. Explore St. Louis also operates the America’s Center Convention Complex and The Dome at America’s Center.