

FISCAL YEAR

2026

ANNUAL REPORT

explore **st.louis**



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The Commissioners listed below served during the 2026 Fiscal Year.

CHAIRMAN

Stephen M. O'Loughlin
President & COO
Lodging Hospitality Management

VICE-CHAIRMAN

David Robert, CHA
CEO & Co-Founder
Midas Hospitality, LLC

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Mary Elizabeth Grimes
President
Marian Middle School

COMMISSIONERS

Charles M. Downs III
Managing Partner
Sugarfire, Hi-Pointe, Cyrano's, Boathouse

Nicole Greer
Senior Specialist Data Analysis
AT&T

Reginald Johnson
Vice President
UNITE HERE Local 74

Han Ko
President & CEO
USAKO Group

Sam Koplar
President
Koplar Properties

Kurt D. Lord
Managing Member
Lord Partners, LLC

Christopher Randall
Director of Community Impact
21c Museum Hotel St. Louis

Geneya Sauro
General Manager
Loews Hotels



Celebrating 150 Years of Forest Park

Forest Park represents the heart of St. Louis – a beloved gathering place where generations have created lasting memories.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Momentum continued to build across St. Louis in FY26 as our region welcomed visitors with confidence, creativity and a shared sense of purpose. Visitors filled hotel rooms, attended conventions and events, explored our neighborhoods and discovered the experiences that make St. Louis unlike any other city. There is much to be proud of in what we accomplished together. FY26 also marked the creation of our Department of Community Engagement, strengthening Explore St. Louis' role as a convener, connector and catalyst for regional growth and creating a stronger foundation for collaboration with partners and communities throughout the region.

Our sales efforts produced meaningful results. Explore St. Louis welcomed 420 groups that generated nearly 493,000 hotel room nights and brought an estimated 991,000 attendees to the region. Our team also secured 444 future groups representing more than 365,000 room nights and an estimated \$420 million in future economic impact. These results reflect the strength of our destination and the work of our team and hospitality partners to keep St. Louis competitive for conventions, meetings and events.

Hospitality remained at the heart of our work. Our Convention & Visitor Services team serviced 369 conventions and events and delivered more than 390,000 visitor interactions through visitor services and community events. That spirit was especially visible at America's Center and The Dome, where 59 events welcomed more than 732,000 attendees. Major conventions and competitions showcased our ability to deliver complex events, while concerts, Battlehawks games and other large-scale experiences energized downtown and brought people together.

We also found new ways to introduce St. Louis to leisure travelers and meeting planners. Leisure campaigns generated more than 217 million impressions, while new messaging, partnerships and sales tools helped meeting professionals discover the venues, experiences and hospitality that set St. Louis apart. Social channels produced 108.5 million impressions, 28 million video views and 2.7 million engagements, while national media coverage generated more than 1.55 billion in potential reach. British Airways' nonstop service between London and St. Louis also opened an exciting new gateway for international visitors.

The St. Louis Film Office continued attracting productions that generated spending, hotel stays and opportunities for local crews while showcasing our region to broader audiences. The impact of all this work extends far beyond the numbers. Every convention, sporting event, concert, production and leisure trip supports jobs, creates opportunities for local businesses and introduces visitors to the people and places that define St. Louis. From exploring our neighborhoods to gathering downtown, tourism strengthens communities throughout the region.

In St. Louis, tourism creates jobs, supports local businesses and generates investment throughout our region. When visitors experience our community as welcoming, energetic and full of possibility, they remind us to see it through that same lens. The momentum we've built gives us much to look forward to in FY27. By coming together around a unified St. Louis story, we have an exciting opportunity to share what makes our region so special with the world and build on the progress underway.

None of this progress would be possible without the dedication of our partners, volunteers, hospitality professionals and community leaders. Thank you for believing in St. Louis and for bringing our spirit of hospitality to life every day. Your partnership helps visitors feel welcome and extends the benefits of tourism to people and businesses throughout our region. I am grateful for your commitment, proud of what we have accomplished together and look forward to all we will accomplish in the year ahead.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Dean".

Brad Dean
President & CEO
Explore St. Louis

MARKETING

Putting St. Louis on the Map

LEISURE MARKETING

Expanded Reach on a Monumental Platform

The Monumental. Every Day. platform kept St. Louis visible and compelling throughout the travel journey, pairing bold creative with a broad mix of paid media to expand awareness and drive action. Across search, social, connected TV, programmatic display and travel platforms, our leisure advertising generated **217.4 million impressions**, **3.5 million clicks** and **29.4 million video views** – keeping St. Louis top of mind and moving travelers from inspiration to consideration.

Turning Inspiration Into Travel

Independent media and website attribution research connected advertising exposure with actual visitation to St. Louis. Kansas City led nonlocal markets with nearly **160,000 observed visits**, while Chicago, Indianapolis, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Houston also demonstrated strong performance.

Indianapolis Takes Notice

A targeted campaign surrounding the Indianapolis 500 put St. Louis front and center in one of our most important drive markets. High-impact out-of-home and digital media generated more than **4.1 million measurable impressions** and **17,571 observed visits**.

24.1X

ROAS

Expedia helped turn travel intent into measurable bookings.

\$2.24M+ in gross bookings
11,100 room nights



leisure kpi

217.4M

TOTAL AD IMPRESSIONS

3.5M

TOTAL CLICKS

29.4M

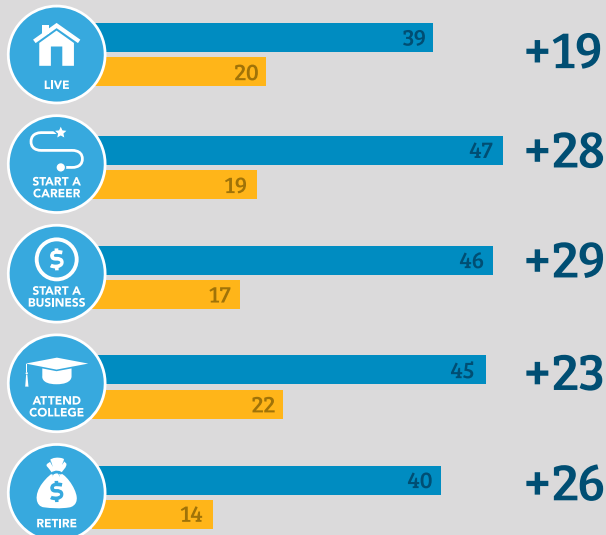
VIDEO VIEWS



Tourism Marketing is Changing Perceptions

Tourism marketing significantly enhanced travelers' perceptions of St. Louis across economic development attributes. St. Louis is a good place to:

■ AWARE
■ NOT AWARE



SOCIAL MEDIA

Starting the Conversation

Record-Setting Reach

Explore St. Louis' social channels generated more than **108.5 million impressions**, **28 million video views** and **2.7 million engagements** during FY26, exceeding every major performance goal established through the MMGY Global social media audit.

Video Took Off

Video became one of the year's biggest success stories, growing dramatically year over year. Two posts reached viral-level audiences, including a Cardinals TikTok that reached **2.4 million views** and Candy Cane Lane content that reached **1.5 million views**.

Experiences Drive Engagement

The year's highest-performing posts had one thing in common: they invited audiences to experience St. Louis. Sports, seasonal traditions, neighborhoods, attractions and practical trip-planning content consistently encouraged viewers to save, share and make plans.

More of the Region in the Story

Explore St. Louis expanded storytelling throughout St. Louis County, with 430 posts featuring or mentioning county businesses, attractions and parks. That content generated **20 million impressions**, **1.2 million engagements** and **5.2 million video views**.

An Always-On Storytelling Engine

Our new Always-On Content Studio created a steady stream of professionally produced neighborhood and community stories. Early features from Eureka and Webster Groves to farmers markets, art galleries and Jefferson Barracks helped build a growing library of authentic, evergreen destination content.

Influencers Expand Our Reach

Explore St. Louis partnered with 17 content creators to showcase the region through food, family travel, road trips, nightlife, music and hidden gems. Influencer content generated **1.18 million views and impressions**, nearly **90,000 engagements** and an engagement rate of approximately 7.6%, strengthening destination awareness among high-value travelers.



Check out those engagements!

108M
IMPRESSIONS

28M
VIDEO VIEWS

2.7M
ENGAGEMENTS

COMMUNICATIONS

Telling Our Story

St. Louis in the National Conversation

Explore St. Louis rebuilt its public relations program in FY26 while continuing to earn attention from influential travel media. New agency partnerships with BerlinRosen and Black Diamond expanded domestic and international reach while the Explore St. Louis team led strategy and regional storytelling.

Stories With Reach

Coverage in *USA TODAY*, *AFAR*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Tasting Table* and other national outlets showcased everything from St. Louis' arts and culinary traditions to free attractions, family travel and Route 66. Domestic media efforts generated more than **1.55 billion** in potential reach.

Bringing the Story to Life

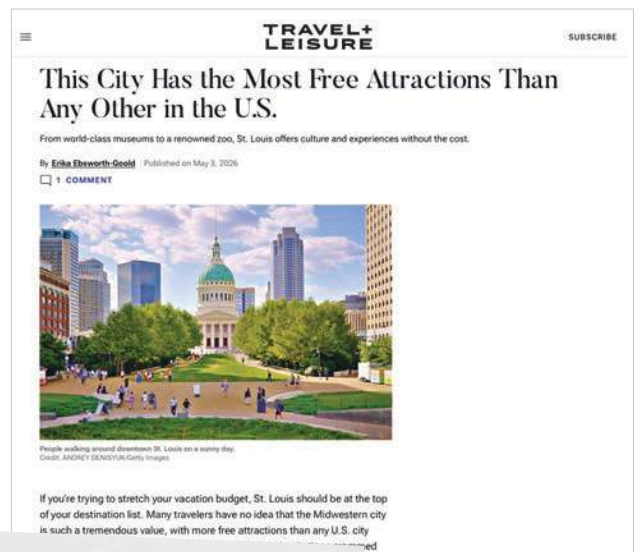
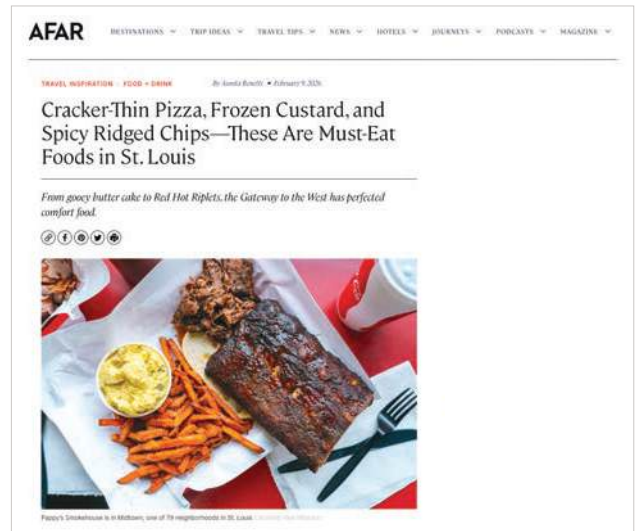
Nearly 30 individual and group media visits gave journalists the opportunity to experience St. Louis firsthand. Customized itineraries developed with hotels, attractions, restaurants and community partners resulted in new stories while building relationships with writers and editors for future coverage.

A New Gateway to the World

The launch of British Airways' nonstop service between London and St. Louis created one of the year's most significant storytelling opportunities. Explore St. Louis joined British Airways, Brand USA and Missouri tourism partners to introduce UK travelers and media to the region.

International Impact

UK and Ireland efforts surrounding the launch generated **85 media placements**, more than **36 million in circulation** and over **\$1.4 million** in advertising value equivalent. Two UK missions also produced 42 face-to-face media meetings and helped attract more than 150 guests to the route launch event at the U.S. Embassy in London.



ST. LOUIS FILM OFFICE

Lights. Camera. St. Louis.

St. Louis on Screen

Film and television activity continued to grow throughout the region in FY26, with projects ranging from feature films and documentaries to national television series and digital productions.

Productions Across the Region

Featured projects brought cameras to the Gateway Arch, Kiener Plaza, The Grandel, Grant's Farm, Union Station, The Hill, Delmar Loop, universities, schools and neighborhoods throughout St. Louis – demonstrating the variety of locations the region can offer producers.

Bigger Productions, Local Impact

Productions including *Chasing Summer*, *Love on The Hill*, a *Discovery Channel* series, and others continue to bring production spending, hotel demand and local crew opportunities to the region. *The Streak*, currently in production during the reporting period, carried a multi-million dollar budget.

Competing for Production

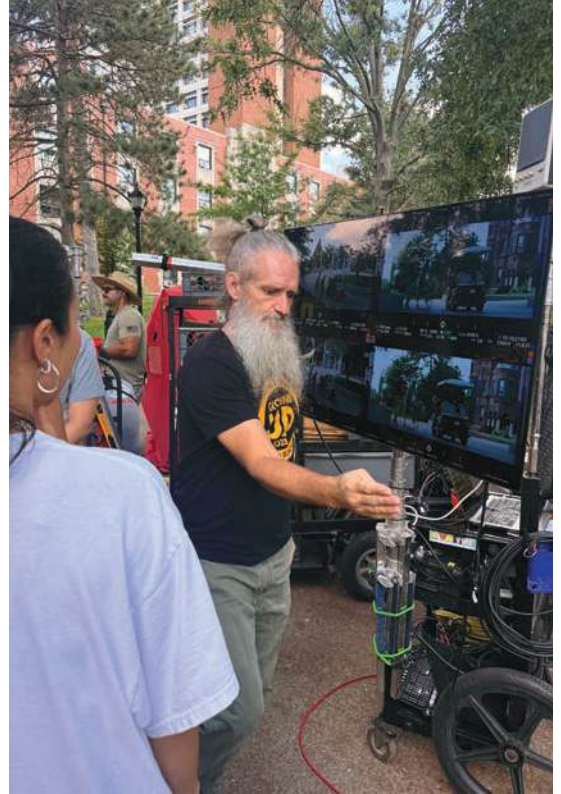
Missouri's Film Production Tax Credit continued to generate interest from producers and strengthen the state's competitiveness. The St. Louis Film Office complemented the incentive with direct outreach at industry events and promotion of the region's architecture, neighborhoods, landscapes, venues and cultural attractions.

Growing a Creative Economy

Partnerships with hotels, attractions, universities, St. Louis Public Schools, workforce organizations, local filmmakers and industry professionals helped connect production activity with the broader community.

Looking Ahead

The Film Office remains focused on recruiting larger productions, expanding television and digital work, supporting local filmmakers, growing workforce development and positioning St. Louis as a nationally recognized production hub.



45

FEATURED
PROJECTS

+\$14M

OVERALL
PROJECT SPEND

2,500

DAYS OF
FILMING

M&C MARKETING

Making the Case for St. Louis

MEETING & CONVENTION MARKETING

Plan Something Monumental

'Monumental. Every Day.' expanded into the meetings market with a new invitation: Plan Your Monumental Event in St. Louis. The campaign connected the destination brand with the venues, experiences and hospitality that make meetings in St. Louis memorable.

Reaching Planners Where They Plan

Strategic advertising across print, digital, paid social and industry platforms kept St. Louis visible among meeting professionals throughout the decision-making process. Partnerships with MPI, ASAE, PCMA, Meetings Today, Meeting Mentor and Cvent reached planners actively considering destinations and event solutions.

New Tools for Sales

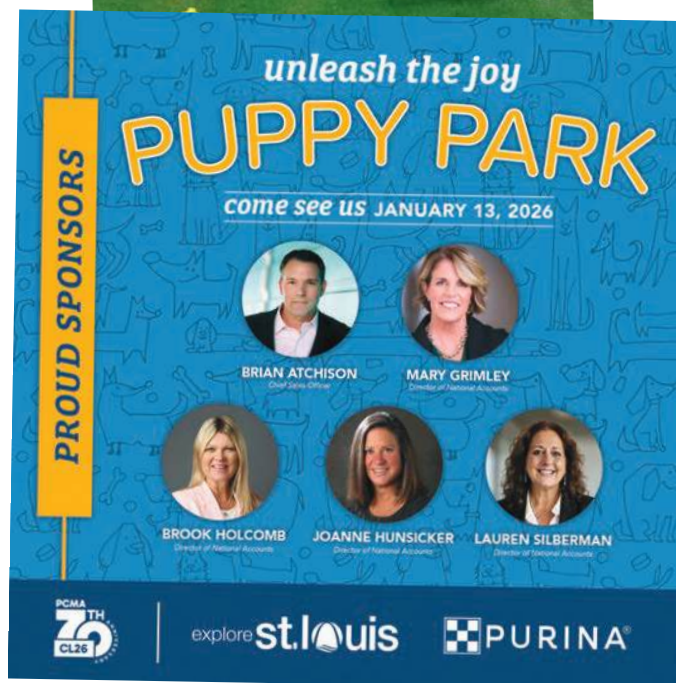
Explore St. Louis introduced DIGIDECK and Playeasy to strengthen destination presentations and sports-event sales. The new platforms give the sales team more dynamic ways to customize the St. Louis story for individual customers.

Beyond the Ballroom

A new video series highlighted unexpected meeting venues, beginning with City Museum, encouraging planners to imagine experiences that could only happen in St. Louis.

Showing Up Differently

The St. Louis tradeshow experience continued to pair bold design with destination-themed activations featuring sports, arts, culture and local flavor – creating natural conversation starters and strong booth traffic at major industry events.



*peep the City Museum
Unique Venues video!*



SALES

Bringing Business Home

Business That Moves the Region

Meetings and conventions generated significant economic activity throughout St. Louis in FY26. Explore St. Louis welcomed **420 groups** that produced **492,880 hotel room nights** and attracted an estimated **991,178 attendees**.

Big Events, Big Impact

Events defined FY26. Four Capitol Sports volleyball tournaments led groups with 50,892 room nights, followed by Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Session with 43,243. SC25 Super Computing generated 27,400, VEX Robotics World Championships 25,650, and U.S. Figure Skating Championships 17,421, demonstrating St. Louis' range and scale.

Impact Beyond Downtown

Group business reached far beyond America's Center. Hotel-based groups and events at sports facilities, universities, attractions and other venues helped distribute visitor spending throughout the metropolitan area.

The Community Helps Close the Sale

Explore St. Louis expanded the role of local leaders and subject-matter experts during prospective customer visits. Connecting professionals with people who share their industries and missions provided a more authentic view of St. Louis and helped strengthen the destination's competitive position.

Building the Next Pipeline

While servicing current-year business, the sales team secured **444 future groups** representing **365,419 room nights**, approximately **873,000 attendees** and an estimated **\$420 million** in future economic impact.

scorecard

HOSTED

420

GROUPS

492,880

ROOM NIGHTS

991,178

ATTENDEES

FUTURE BUSINESS

444

GROUPS

365,419

ROOM NIGHTS

\$420M

PROJECTED ECONOMIC IMPACT



CONVENTION & VISITOR SERVICES

Making Meetings Memorable

Hospitality at Every Stage

Convention & Visitor Services strengthened Explore St. Louis' ability to serve meeting professionals, visitors and partners while preparing the region for increasingly complex events. The team balanced today's convention operations with the advance planning required to make tomorrow's meetings successful.

A Strong Year for Convention Services

The department serviced **369 conventions and events**, including 59 at America's Center and The Dome, generating **355,098 actualized hotel room nights** – its strongest convention performance since before the pandemic.

More Visitor Connections

Visitor & Volunteer Services delivered **390,185 visitor interactions**, exceeding its annual engagement goal. Visitor centers, airport activations, hotel welcome desks, convention services, volunteers and community events helped deliver the warm, knowledgeable welcome that defines St. Louis hospitality.

369
EVENTS SERVICED

390K
VISITOR INTERACTIONS

59
EVENTS AT AC &
THE DOME

One Team, Greater Impact

FY26 also brought Visitor & Volunteer Services and Meet St. Louis together under one Convention & Visitor Services division. The alignment strengthened collaboration across convention services, housing, volunteer leadership, visitor engagement and destination operations.

Ready Before Guests Arrive

Planning visits, customized service plans, housing strategy, public safety coordination, accessibility planning and community partnerships helped make the destination more prepared before each meeting began.



FACILITIES

Making It All Happen

A Full Calendar

America's Center Convention Complex hosted **59 events during FY26**, welcoming hundreds of thousands of guests for conventions, competitions, consumer shows, concerts and community events.

Conventions with Scale

The year's calendar included the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Session, the Association for Computing Machinery's Super Computing Conference, TransWorld's Halloween & Attractions Show, American Taekwondo Association events and the RECF & VEX Robotics World Championships.

Big Nights at The Dome

The Dome remained one of the Midwest's most versatile large-scale venues. Chris Brown and Zach Bryan joined a lineup that also included SMX World Championship Playoffs, Gateway Dirt Nationals, Monster Jam, AMA Supercross and St. Louis Battlehawks games.

Investing in the Guest Experience

New LED lighting was installed throughout the exhibit halls and the Dome's public areas, improving the experience for clients and guests while increasing the versatility of the complex.



\$416.5M

**ANNUAL
ECONOMIC IMPACT**

NEW!



A New Face on Washington Avenue

Renovation of the Washington Avenue entrance began at the end of FY26. Planned enhancements to lighting, video and audio will transform a major gateway into the convention complex while contributing to the look and energy of the Washington Avenue corridor.

America's Center & The Dome FY26 Events

Group	Month/Year	Attendees
Seventh-day Adventists General Conference Session	June-July 2025	40,000
Younique Annual Conference	July-Aug 2025	500
VPPPA Safety + Symposium	Aug 2025	1,100
St. Louis Police Foundation Luncheon	Aug-Sept 2025	670
Chris Brown: Breezy Bowl Tour	Sept 2025	48,514
The Gospel Music Hall of Fame Induction Gala	Sept 2025	200
SMX World Championship Playoffs	Sept 2025	21,931
Monster Jam	Sept 2025	23,988
United Pentecostal Church International General Conference	Sept 2025	12,500
Lutheran Education Association Convocation	Sept-Oct 2025	3,000
The Association for Manufacturing Excellence International Conference	Oct 2025	800
GalaxyCon 2025	Oct 2025	8,000
American Association of School Librarians National Conference & Expo	Oct 2025	2,280
Bands of America Super Regional Championship	Oct 2025	13,000
BJC Milestone Service Anniversary Celebration	Oct 2025	2,000
The St. Louis American Salute to Excellence	Oct-Nov 2025	675
Tree Care Industry Expo	Oct-Nov 2025	6,500
Association of Computing Machinery SC Conference	Nov 2025	17,000
Hot Chocolate 15K/5K Expo	Dec 2025	7,800
Gateway Dirt Nationals	Dec 2025	48,333
Missouri Bridal & Wedding Expo	Dec 2025	3,122
United Rentals Annual Meeting	Jan 2026	2,800
Monster Jam	Jan 2026	45,379
St. Louis Auto Show	Jan 2026	7,191
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Joint Regional Founders Day Celebration	Jan 2026	1,000
STL RV Travel Show	Jan-Feb 2026	11,585
Varsity Spirit American Gateway Nationals	Jan-Feb 2026	3,908
Capitol Sports: Dennis Lafata Gateway Bid Classic	Feb 2026	13,000
Capitol Sports: President's Weekend Tournament	Feb 2026	26,000
SIGCSE: Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education	Feb 2026	1,300
St. Louis Boat & Fishing Show	Feb 2026	6,500
Team Central St. Louis Classic Gymnastics Invitational	Feb 2026	2,200
ACBL Spring North American Bridge Championships	Feb-Mar 2026	2,623
Totally Rad Vintage Fest	Feb-Mar 2026	10,816
St. Louis Home & Garden Show	March 2026	5,504



Group	Month/Year	Attendees
Varsity Spirit Double Down Nationals St. Louis	March 2026	3,306
Zach Bryan: With Heaven On Tour	March 2026	62,262
Capitol Sports: Mideast Volleyball Qualifier Weekend I	March 2026	15,000
Capitol Sports: Mideast Volleyball Qualifier Weekend II	March 2026	15,000
TransWorld's Halloween & Attractions, Christmas & Interactive Entertainment Shows	March 2026	8,000
UFL Battlehawks (6 games)	March-June 2026	128,663
AMA Supercross Series	April 2026	27,887
Quilts, Inc.: Quilt! Knit! Stitch! St. Louis	April 2026	1,428
American Taekwondo Association Spring National Tournament	April 2026	7,175
Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis: Bankwide Town Hall	April 2026	800
TechSTL STL Tech Week	April 2026	980
RECF & VEX Robotics World Championships	April-May 2026	32,500
Population Association of America Annual Meeting	May 2026	2,028
Creativation by NAMTA	May 2026	1,224
Epic Dance Inc. Competition	May 2026	1,000
Oddities & Curiosities Expo	May 2026	11,507
American Association of Suicidology AAS 2026	May 2026	900
Villain Arts St. Louis Tattoo Arts Festival	May 2026	2,115
Missouri Bridal & Wedding Expo	May 2026	1,000
International Fuel Ethanol Workshop & Expo	May-June 2026	2,118
National Association of Credit Managers: Credit Congress & Expo	June 2026	1,100
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists: Pharmacy Futures	June 2026	1,300
National Baptist Convention USA, Inc. Congress of Christian Education	June 2026	3,000



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Building Connections

Building a Stronger Bridge

FY26 marked the creation of Explore St. Louis' Department of Community Engagement, designed to strengthen relationships across the region and deepen the organization's role as a convener, connector and catalyst for economic growth.

Four Functions, One Mission

The new department brings together Business Development, Community Engagement and Fulfillment, Events and Activations, and Stakeholder Communications to create a coordinated approach to partnerships and regional engagement.

Building the Foundation

The first year focused on creating the systems needed for long-term impact, including stakeholder engagement frameworks, CRM improvements, listening tours and new opportunities for industry education and collaboration.

Creating Meaningful Connections

Signature initiatives including Hospitality Heroes, Industry Access and the Annual Meeting continued to evolve, creating more opportunities to convene the hospitality community, share knowledge and celebrate the people helping move the region forward.

From Infrastructure to Impact

With the foundation established, the department enters FY27 focused on broader stakeholder engagement, stronger communications, adoption of the region's unified St. Louis brand and opportunities surrounding Explore St. Louis' new AI-driven digital platform.

convener.
connector.
catalyst.



ESL AT WORK

(with a side of fun sprinkled in)



THANK YOU TO OUR 900+ PARTNERS THAT HELP KEEP ST. LOUIS ON TOP

FY26 CORPORATE PARTNERS





701 Convention Plaza, Suite 300
St. Louis, MO 63101
www.explorestlouis.com