



# Tourism & Hospitality

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RAPID RECOVERY  
PROGRAM TOOLKIT

**This toolkit has been made possible through technical assistance provided by the Baker-Polito Administration's Local Rapid Recovery Planning program.**



The Local Rapid Recovery Planning (RRP) program is a key part of the Baker-Polito Administration's Partnerships for Recovery Plan, the strategy established to help communities stabilize and grow the Massachusetts economy as a result of the economic impacts brought on by COVID-19. The plan invests \$774 million in efforts to get people back to work, support small businesses, foster innovation, revitalize downtowns, and keep people in stable housing.

In addition to the planning program, recovery efforts include a Small Business Relief Program administered by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation. This program, which concluded in May 2021, provided more than \$687.2 million to over 15,000 businesses across the Commonwealth, with a focus on businesses located in Gateway Cities, among demographic priorities, or operating in sectors most impacted by the pandemic. Cities, towns, and non-profit entities are using Regional Pilot Project Grant Program funding for recovery solutions that seek to activate vacant storefronts, support regional supply chain resiliency, and create small business support networks. To promote recovery in the tourism industry and support the ongoing My Local MA marketing initiative encouraging residents to support their local economies by shopping, dining and staying local, another \$1.6 million in grants were awarded through the new Travel and Tourism Recovery Grant Pilot Program. Through April 2021, MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program has invested \$26.4 million in municipal Shared Streets projects to support public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce.

In support of the overall recovery strategy, the Administration made \$9.5 million in awards for 125 communities to create Local Rapid Recovery Plans, through the MA Downtown Initiative Program. These plans address the impacts of COVID-19 on local downtowns and small businesses by partnering with Plan Facilitators and Subject Matter Experts to pursue locally-driven, actionable strategies.

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# Why This Toolkit?

If you build a place where people want to visit, you'll build a place where people want to live.

If you build a place where people want to live, you'll build a place where people want to work.



If you build a place where businesses have to be, you'll build a place where people have to visit.

If you build a place where people want to work, you'll build a place where business needs to be.

- Maura Gast, Irving TX Convention and Visitors Bureau

## Why This Toolkit?

This toolkit serves as an introductory guide for downtown practitioners interested in exploring and building key partnerships with leaders in the hospitality industry. It includes tried-and-tested approaches to cross-industry collaborations from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and around the country, as well as potential funding and technical resources to increase non-resident visitation and accelerate tourism recovery.

### The Importance of Tourism & Hospitality in Downtowns

Hospitality and tourism are closely related industries that are highly dependent on each other for success. While the tourism industry is largely focused on providing the necessary services to assist tourists in traveling, the hospitality industry adds a much-needed layer of service to ensure tourists feel welcomed, comfortable, and entertained in a new place. When high standards of tourism and hospitality products and services are on offer, a destination might create a lasting and memorable experience for tourists and visitors.

In many ways, downtowns are major tourism destinations. Our downtowns and commercial districts are often home to the Big Four sub-industries that comprise tourism and hospitality (as shown in the diagram). The hospitality industry has been driving visitors and atypical spending to our downtowns. These visitors may have arrived on a flight from a domestic or international location, or may have just driven from 50 miles away, or what is more commonly known as 'drive markets'. In 2020, in fact, more than 56% of all domestic visitor trips originated from within New England.

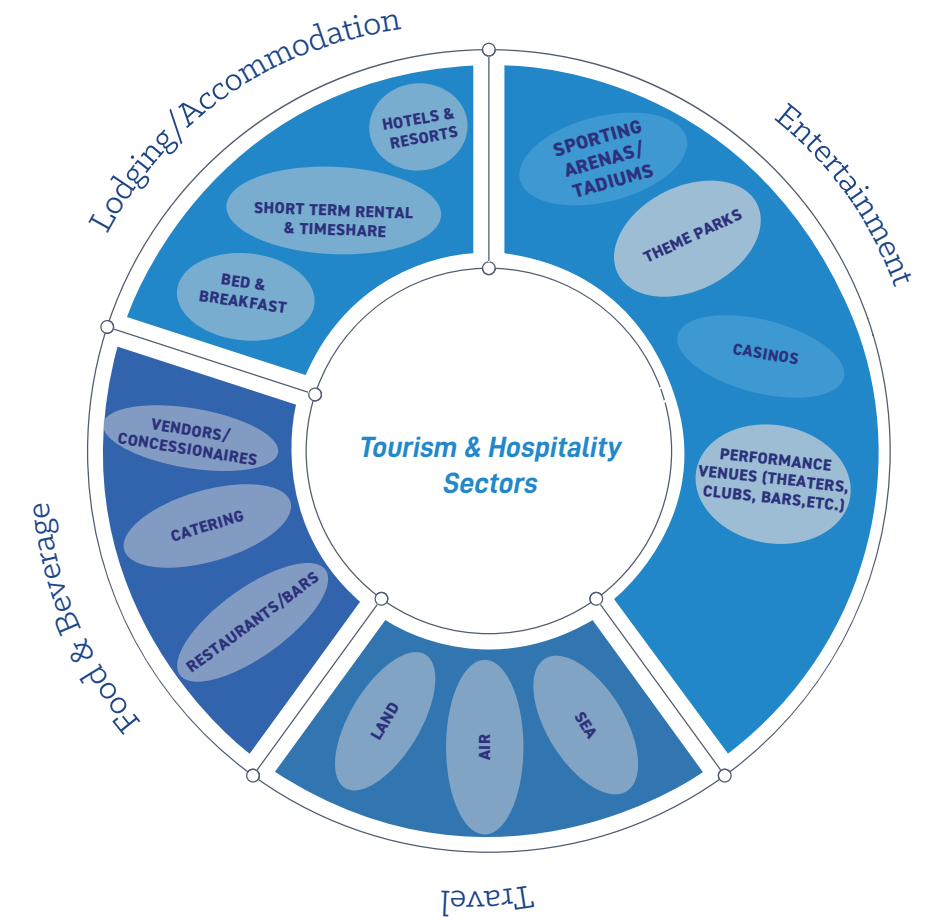
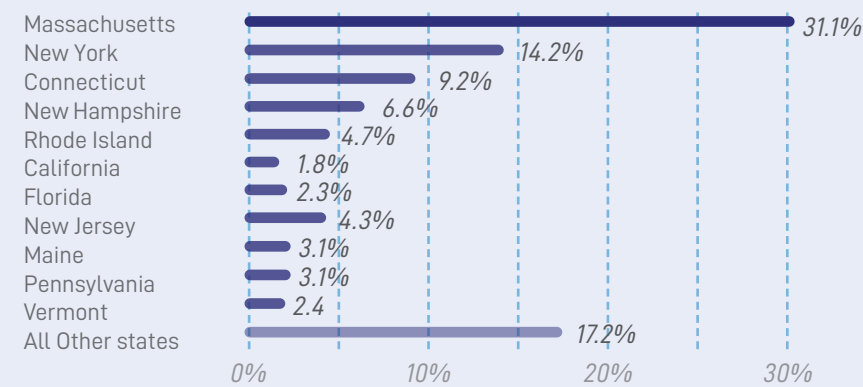


Figure: Share of Total Domestic Visitor Trips (by origin)



Source: Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism TravelStats Newsletter August 2019

**28.1**  
**Million Domestic**  
**Visitor Trips**  
 IN 2019

## Drive Markets Dominate

Occupancies and demand in drive markets\* and second-tier cities, specifically near outdoor attractions, have remained strong throughout the pandemic. Looking to “get away” without getting on a plane, travelers are opting for road trips within a 3-5 hour radius from their home. Many have focused on National Parks and outdoor destinations to enjoy activities that don’t require close contact or wearing a mask, or historically to visit friends and/or relatives (which often includes attending a family/social event and/or shopping)<sup>1</sup>. While nearly every business in the hospitality industry felt the sting of the pandemic, these drive markets have remained strong.

<sup>1</sup> TNS, Travels America, MOTT TRAVEL INDUSTRY REPORT CY2018

\* Drive markets refer to geographic areas located within close proximity to a tourism destination that can be reached by driving (typically within 3-5 hour drive time)

## Economic Impact of Hospitality in Massachusetts

Tourism impacts the local economy in more ways than you might think. Servers at restaurants, the staff at local attractions, shop clerks, even local artists, and musicians all directly benefit from tourism dollars flowing into communities. Even for those who don't work at a business that receives direct income from tourism, there are many unseen benefits provided by tourism-related tax revenue. The taxes paid by people who come to visit offset each residences own state and local taxes and help to pay for public safety initiatives, new infrastructure, and more!

Prior to COVID-19, tourism was the third-largest industry in the Commonwealth, providing work for more than one in 10 Massachusetts residents. Visitor spending supported 155,500 full-time, part-time, and seasonal jobs and payroll of \$5.9 billion. The state received \$1.0 billion in revenues through the state sales tax, and taxes on travel-related personal and corporate income. Local community revenue totaled \$620 million in sales, property, and excise tax revenue.



Figure: Direct Economic Impact of Travel on Massachusetts, 2015-2019

Year	Expenditures (\$ Millions)	Payroll (\$ Millions)	Employment	State Tax Receipts (\$ Millions)	Local Tax Receipts (\$ Millions)
2019	24,869.8	5,933.3	155,500	1025.2	619.5
2018	24,156.5	5,618.8	153,200	990.6	596.5
2017	22,869.8	5,330.6	149,400	943.4	566.5
2016	21,820.2	5,040.9	146,300	904.8	541.5
2015	21,282.6	4,647.1	142,200	855.1	520.0

Source: USTA, The Economic Impact of Travel on MA Counties, 2019

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## Breaking Down Silos Between Downtowns & Regional Tourism Councils

“It seems many local and regional organizations are doing the same thing and there is growing overlap. Everyone is pulling in the same direction and competing for member dollars when they should really be working in partnership with one another ”

- Keiko Matsudo Orrall  
Executive Director, MOTT

Today, few downtown organizations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are actively engaged with Regional Tourism Councils (RTCs). As multi-jurisdictional organizations, RTCs work closely with the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism to brand and promote the State as a premiere tourism destination.

By developing a partnership and being active with your local RTC, your downtown can:

- **Leverage New Financial Resources and Marketing Expertise:** RTCs have access to destination-specific resources and expertise to help present the destination in a brand-consistent manner.
- **Work Collaboratively on Mutually Beneficial Economic Development Opportunities:** Often, RTCs partner on specific opportunities such as a corporate relocation or community development plan (e.g., stadium redevelopments). RTCs can work with downtown stakeholders to provide financial support/cost relief to enrich local community and visitor offerings.
- **Build advocacy and lobbying power:** Downtown leaders and RTCs should leverage each other's existing relationships with business and government leaders in order to advocate for common economic development goals.

This toolkit aims to demystify the world of tourism and hospitality so that downtown leaders and organizations can find ways to build new working relationships with RTCs and access resources within the hospitality industry, including with arts, cultural & entertainment partners with strong lobbying power across the Commonwealth.

### Industry Terminology:

**Regional Tourism Council (RTC)** refers to a multi-jurisdictional organization within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that functions as a Destination Marketing Organization for its region.

**Destination Marketing and/or Management Organization (DMO)** is an industry term for an organization whose primary function is to attract visitors and drive activity to the tourism and hospitality industries. DMOs are better known as Regional Tourism Councils in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

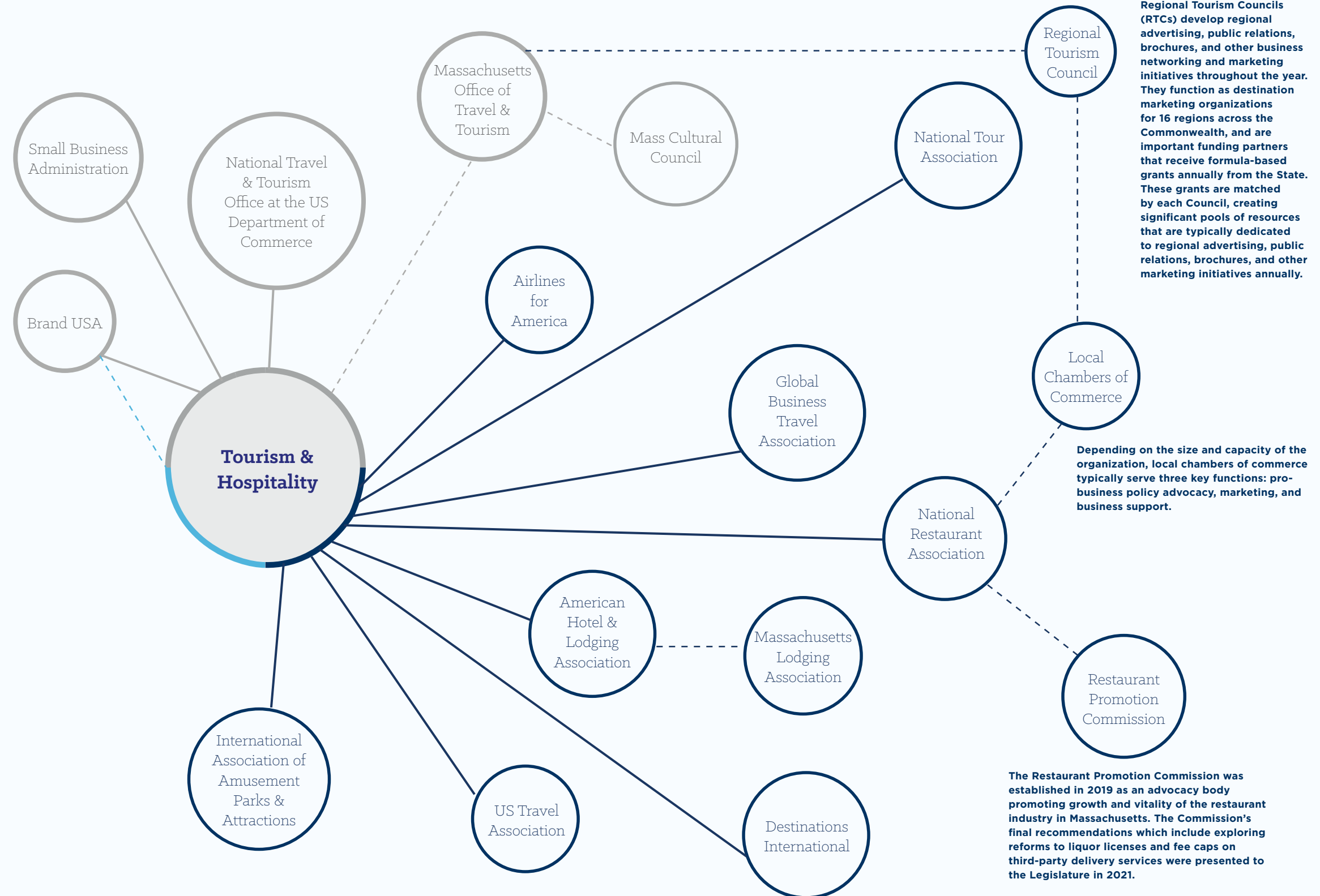
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## Getting Started

# Getting Started

## Who are the major players?

In order to begin building partnerships, downtowns need to understand the vast landscape of potential partners and allies in the tourism and hospitality industries. The following diagram outlines major players in the industry across various sectors (Public, Private, Public-Private, Non-Profit), and a brief overview of their key functions and past/existing technical programs and resources.



## Reaching out and Collaborating with Tourism & Hospitality partners

Before you begin any outreach to potential partners, take the time to understand the full landscape of tourism drivers & suppliers in your downtown and across the municipality or region. This inventory or mapping exercise is critical in preparing for robust conversations with tourism leaders at the state and national levels. It will enable you to speak knowledgeably about the visitor economy in your downtown and region and to help identify any areas of need or concern that may need to be addressed with tourism and hospitality partners.

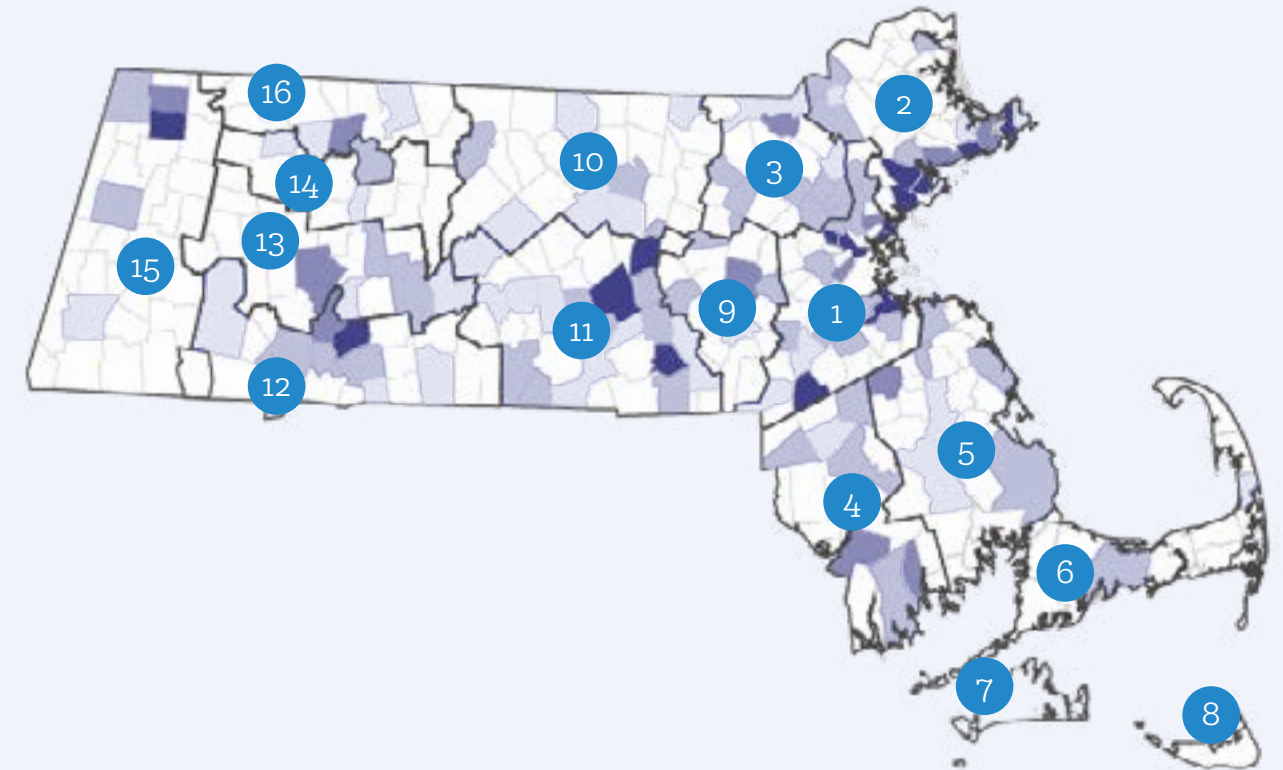
As part of the asset mapping and inventory exercise, engage with local tourism vendors & hospitality businesses that you may have not reached out to before. This may be achieved through 1-on-1 interviews or through committee meetings that bring together a number of stakeholders. These multi-stakeholder meetings should serve as introductory touch points to exchange information about each other's business functions, key priorities, and long-term vision for downtown as part of the regional destination.

Once you have local partners on board, begin communicating with your Regional Tourism Council – share your asset maps/inventories, and begin developing a collective vision for the regional destination that folds in the myriad hospitality offerings downtown – including entertainment facilities, cultural festivals & activities, food & beverage businesses, and lodging.



### Case Study: Puerto Rico Destination Plan Asset Mapping

Foundation for Puerto Rico engaged tourism and destination planning consultants, Streetsense, to develop destination plans for six regions in Puerto Rico. Each plan included a comprehensive map of existing tourism assets, categorized by type (e.g. arts/cultural, agro-tourism, outdoor recreation, etc.) The identification of these assets and their subsequent cluster identities helped inform the development of key project recommendations around branding, marketing, and capital improvements.



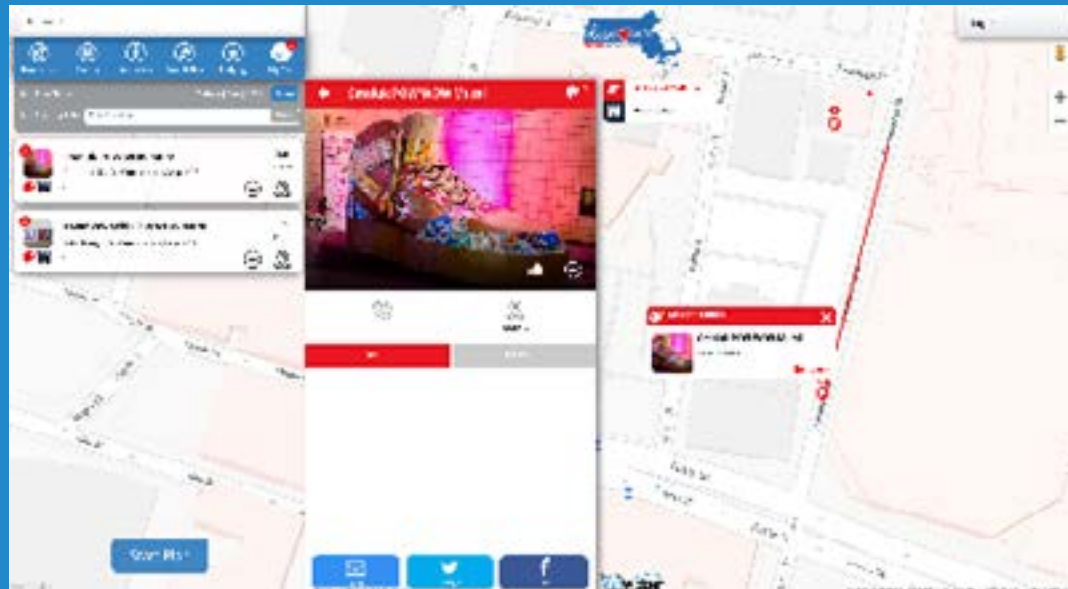
	Regional Tourism Council	FY22 Allocation
1	Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau	\$2,968,854
2	North of Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau	\$542,020
3	Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau	\$455,088
4	Southeastern MA Convention & Visitors Bureau	\$216,986
5	Plymouth County Convention & Visitors Bureau	\$376,534
6	Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce/Convention & Visitors Bureau	\$613,191
7	Martha's Vineyard Chamber of Commerce	\$301,779
8	Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce	\$344,767
9	MetroWest Tourism & Visitor Bureau	\$334,017
10	Johnny Appleseed Trail/North Central MA	\$270,467
11	Discover Central Massachusetts	\$378,523
12	Greater Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau	\$366,096
13	Hampshire County Tourism & Visitors Bureau	\$259,779
14	Franklin County Chamber of Commerce	\$203,699
15	1Berkshire	\$437,673
16	The Mohawk Trail Association	\$177,980
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$8,247,456</b>



## Working with Regional Tourism Councils to Promote and Market Downtown

### Case Study: Discover Central MA promotes Cultural Offerings in Downtown Worcester

*Discover Central Massachusetts, a Regional Tourism Council (RTC) that promotes the destination and drives visitors to the regional market, oversees the marketing of five unique tourism clusters – the 395 corridor, Blackstone Valley, Sturbridge Townships, Wachusett, and Worcester. Over the years, the RTC has built strong relationships with city leadership, particularly in Worcester, where the arts scene has been booming with the international mural festival, Pow!Wow! The RTC's marketing strategy, which consists of a multi-faceted media campaign (including digital advertising, social media, video, content generation, radio, and print advertising), folds in downtown Worcester as a cultural destination. The Discover Central MA! App and mobile-friendly website, for example, includes Pow!Wow! Murals and various galleries, museums, historic venues, concert halls, and theaters, in its interactive maps so that visitors can create customized trip itineraries downtown. The region's visitor event calendars are also regularly updated with support of local downtown partners who actively manage local festivals.*



### Toolkit Checklist

Action	Page
<input type="checkbox"/> We want to... Identify Market Opportunities and Target Customer Base/Audience Profile	X
<input type="checkbox"/> We want to... Assess quality and conditions of existing tourism supply	X
<input type="checkbox"/> We want to... Enhance key tourism assets	X
<input type="checkbox"/> We want to... Market and promote downtown as a visitor destination	X
<input type="checkbox"/> We want to... Evaluate and measure success of tourism/hospitality strategies	X

# Getting It Done

## Getting It Done

Once you have key partners from the tourism and hospitality industry at the table, there are five critical steps that your downtown may choose to take, collaboratively with your partners, to achieve success in integrating downtown as part of a larger destination development effort.

### We want to... Identify market opportunities and target customer base/audience

Market and demographic data help us understand our existing customer base, their spending power, lifestyle preferences and habits, and the degree to which tourism and hospitality businesses are currently capturing customer dollars. This data may include a mix of quantitative and qualitative information gathered through proprietary secondary data sources such as ESRI Business Analyst Online, Claritas, STR, AirDNA, Placer.ai, Arrivalist, Omnitrak, US Travel, or through primary data sources such as audience surveys.

Proprietary Data Sources	Best For...
ESRI Business Analyst Online	Understanding drive market audiences -local/regional resident demographics, spending power, lifestyle preferences and habits  Understanding retail opportunity - retail leakage summary
Claritas	Understanding drive market audiences -Local/regional resident demographics, spending power, lifestyle preferences and habits
STR	Understanding traveler audiences (beyond drive markets) – global travel sentiment insights, traveler segmentation, consumer research and opinion polls  Understanding Hospitality opportunity – Food & beverage performance benchmark report, hotel performance benchmark report
AirDNA	Understanding short term rental market trends and opportunities – rental supply and demand outlook (based on key metrics such as nights booked, Average Daily Rate, RevPar, and Revenue)
Placer.ai	Understanding real-time footfall traffic and customer insights at key tourism assets and destinations – foot traffic counts and dwell time dashboards, customer profiles based on income, gender, and other favorite shopping/hospitality destinations
Arrivalist	Understanding consumer journeys and real-time, lone term consumer, competitor and market intelligence

The information and data collected should help you understand how spending is distributed across different customer segments, and may present a few potential outcomes that will impact strategies to grow or enhance tourism supply and demand:

### Strong Market

- When annual demand for Food & Accommodation Services is greater than supply, your downtown may already be serving a strong base of visitors. There might be opportunities for existing or new businesses to adapt/enhance offerings so that they better meet visitor customer profiles and spending powers.

### Moderate Market

- When demand for Food & Accommodation Services fluctuates seasonally creating swells of demand for short periods throughout the year, there may be opportunities for businesses to capture surplus demand during peak season. Alternatively, your downtown may choose to create new tourism assets and offerings that generate off-peak season traffic that is currently missing.

### Weak Market

- When there is insufficient annual demand for Food & Accommodation Services, it might be necessary to find ways to build demand through raising awareness of existing assets to new audiences, or growing shares of return visits by delivering quality services and creating memorable experiences.

To gain an even more nuanced understanding of current and/or potential visitors, your organization may consider designing an audience survey or conducting an online sentiment audit.

**Audience Survey:** A well-designed survey is the best way to identify and quantitatively measure sentiment themes, audience perceptions (understand audience familiarity with your brand, segment what they expect in and engagement with your brand, how they expect you to deliver, where to reach them and the best positioning for your brand, etc.), and even behavior patterns (including preferences for transportation/mobility, etc.)

Survey questions should be crafted for target audiences and disseminated using geographic and demographic targeting to ensure audiences in various markets are captured – including those living and/or working downtown, in surrounding regions, and core feeder markets.

**Online Sentiment Audit:** Concurrent with the survey mentioned above, your organization may also consider analyzing sentiment of online conversations. As part of understanding how your destination brand is perceived, it is important to review and glean insights from social media channels, consumer review websites (e.g. TripAdvisor, Google, Yelp, Hotels.Com, Booking.Com), and other digital media coverage. These sentiments are important in influencing current and potential customers and an audit gives your team an actionable summary of what consumers have experienced so you can respond effectively.

Proprietary Data & Tools	Best For...
Digimind	Understanding sentiment analysis, brand monitoring, and influencer sourcing
Conductor	Understanding SEO keyword performance and sourcing content opportunities
Google Analytics	Understanding website analytics (+ easily synced with Google Data Studio for digital reporting and data visualization)
Muck Rack	Monitoring media and business intelligence (particularly for PR research)

While some organizations have the capacity and resources to conduct the above research and analysis, it will sometimes be more effective to engage an experienced professional with the skills and experience necessary to conduct a more comprehensive and unbiased analysis.

### Case Study: Bothell, WA Online Visitor Survey

To determine target markets and an appropriate brand image for Bothell WA tourism, destination marketing consultants, Streetsense conducted an online visitor survey. Survey responses identified three target markets: "Beverage Like-it-Alls: Easy to Please", "Outdoor Urbans: Female City Experiencers", and "Beverage Snobs: Young with Money". Bothell's branding was refreshed to better align with these target markets, and highlighted niche attractions in the region such as agricultural tourism, wineries, and craft beverages.



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## Market Conditions: Seasonal Economy

According to the 2019 Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism Annual Report, more than 60% of domestic visitors arrive in Q2 and Q3 of the calendar year (April-September) creating peak seasons for various destinations that offer outdoor recreation. The seasonality of domestic visitors is incredibly important to consider in destination management as this segment of visitors account for approximately 92% of all visitors to the Commonwealth.

During these seasons, your downtown will need to work closely with tourism & hospitality partners to ensure businesses are well-staffed and -trained to be able to deliver reliable and quality service to visitors. This may require workforce programs and tools to attract and train hospitality workers, as well as transportation infrastructure to ensure accessibility between your destination and neighboring labor pools.

*If your destination is interested in extending peak seasons, see page X for "[Resource: Travel & Tourism Season Extension Program](#)".*



## We want to... Assess quality and conditions of existing tourism supply

A physical assessment is critical to understanding the quality of key tourism assets on offer to visitors. Beginning with the previously created asset map/inventory, conduct a site visit to the most visited tourism assets, and enlist the support of professional teams (as needed) that may be able to provide structural, engineering, and environmental design expertise. The field assessment should rate/score (e.g. ordinal scale) the following factors that impact customer journey and experience:

### Access and Visibility

- How do visitors get to the asset? (Consider modes of transportation, quality of transportation infrastructure, travel time from neighboring assets or accommodation clusters)
- Is it easy and safe for visitors to navigate to/around the asset? (Consider wayfinding/signage, ADA-accessibility)

### Public Realm

- Is the public realm leading to the asset well-maintained?
- Does the public realm create a comfortable and safe environment for visitors? (Consider lighting, pedestrian amenities – sidewalks, street trees, benches, roadbed and crosswalks)

### Private Realm/Asset/Facility

- What are the conditions of visitor amenities? (Consider lobbies/welcome centers, comfort stations/restrooms, ticket booths, paths/trails, food & beverage/retail businesses)
- Is the experience offered at the facility comfortable and safe for all users?
- Is the asset at risk to climate events? If so, are there climate mitigation/preparedness features?

If field assessments are challenging to conduct, consider alternative crowd-sourced information from widely accepted review sites that aggregate consumer sentiment for key assets and destinations. This includes sites such as Google, TripAdvisor, Yelp, Booking.Com, and Hotels.com.

### Using a gap assessment to prioritize asset enhancements

Combined with findings from the market study and customer profiles, evaluate the extent to which the region's tourism-supporting assets and offerings are meeting those needs and serving the tastes and preferences of the previously identified customer segments. Where gaps exist between customer needs/expectations and current quality of offerings, consider developing strategies and tools that will close the gap. This may include adapting existing public infrastructure, tourism assets and experiences, as well as marketing and branding efforts.



## We want to... Enhance key tourism assets

Based on your gap assessment, there may be a number of strategies/actions that will need to be undertaken to improve the overall visitor experience or to reinforce the quality of tourism assets for which the region is already well known, i.e., Demand and Supply.

**Strategies for Growing Demand from Visitors:** This includes marketing, promotion and branding efforts, as well as strategies that improve the accessibility and visibility of the region's offerings.

- **Marketing, Events + Promotion:** Includes strategies to raise the profile and awareness of existing regional offerings and improve overall visitation to the region's unique assets. See the following section for an overview.
- **Access and Mobility:** Includes strategies to address challenges that visitors may have getting to/from destination and key assets, and their preferences for moving around the region and between assets or experiences once they arrive.

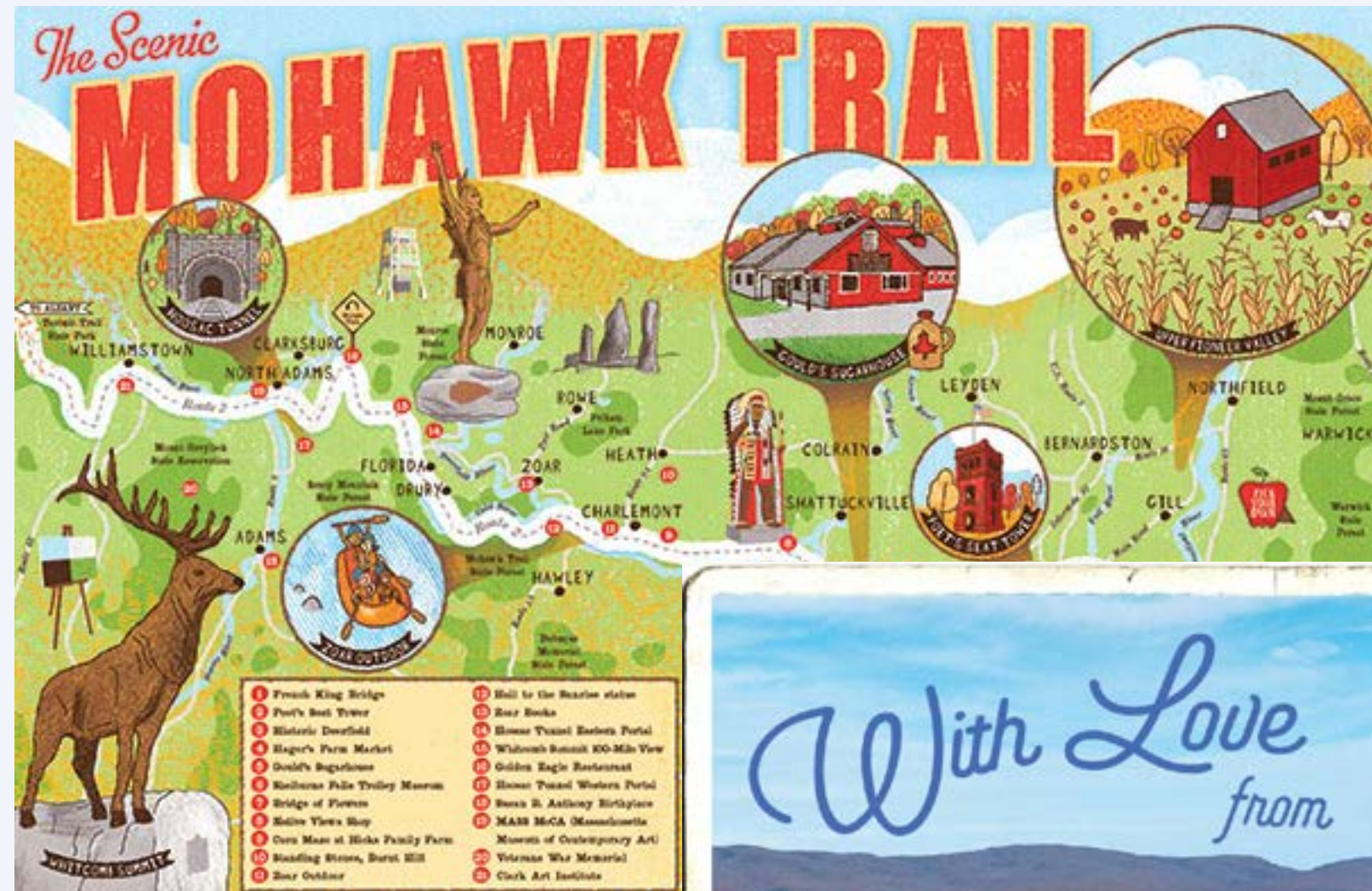
**Strategies to Improve the Supply of Tourism Offerings:** This includes the quality and quantity of offerings that are unique to your destination, with an emphasis on strategic destination drivers that reinforce brand and further differentiate you from other destinations. Improvements to supply focus on the assets that were analyzed and assessed in preceding assessments.

- **Public Infrastructure:** Includes strategies to stabilize and support any form of growth in tourism, including roads/highways/bridges, utilities (power, water, sewage, broadband), disaster mitigation/resiliency infrastructure.
- **Asset Enhancements:** Includes capital investments that improve tourism suppliers and/or strategic destination drivers that result in measurable improvement to the visitor experience.
- **Business Support:** Includes strategies focused on the needs of existing hospitality businesses and that help them raise their profile and better meet the needs and expectations of visitors.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Includes strategies that address organizational or regulatory challenges associated with implementation of other projects (e.g. creating new partnerships, organizations, funding models to implement, manage and maintain key assets in question).

**Case Study: Celebrate the Mohawk Trail at 100 - A Regional Marketing Strategy**

To celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the Mohawk Trail - a scenic byway for automobiles that drives tourism in western Massachusetts, business organizations across the region (from Athol to Williamstown) collaborated on a year-long host of events, including temporary art installations on the trail and year-long family-friendly events.

The collaborative marketing effort was the first of its kind for the tourism destination, resulting in a single marketing theme and goal across the region for the year 2014. The coalition of partners included a mix of downtown and regional destination management organizations (Franklin County Community Development Corporation, Greater Shelburne Falls Area Business Association, Mohawk Trail Association, Williamstown Chamber of Commerce, North Adams Office of Tourism and Community Events, and North Quabbin Visitors Bureau).



Guide to the Scenic Mohawk Trail. Source: Yankee (Ian Phillips)



Source: Spirit of Massachusetts

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## Supply Challenge: Hospitality Labor Shortage

Among key business issues facing tourism destinations in recent years is the limited supply of a skilled and trained hospitality workforce. Service workers earning minimum wage are often faced with challenges in finding affordable housing near areas of employment such as tourism destinations and downtowns.

In response, creative destinations such as the Gulf Shores in Alabama are tackling this challenge head on by delivering workforce housing for its hospitality workers. [Gateway Initiative](#) – a collaboration of the South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce, Coastal Alabama Chamber of Commerce, Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism, and the Coastal Alabama Community College – will be moving ahead on plans for a roughly \$200 million campus that would house a workforce development center and dormitories. The campus is expected to train and house more than 2,000 additional seasonal workers from universities across the country and J-1 international workers.



## We want to... Market and promote downtown as a visitor destination

The destination marketing strategy in your region may or may not already be promoting downtowns as key assets or attractions. In order to tap into the visitor/traveler audiences that your Regional Tourism Councils (RTC) are reaching, it is important to first assess existing marketing collateral produced by your RTC to understand the brand pillars that have already been established. Ask yourself:

- Does downtown align with an existing brand pillar in the regional destination marketing strategy?
- Is there value in highlighting downtown as a brand pillar as part of the regional destination marketing strategy?

If the answer is yes to either question, consider working with your regional tourism council to develop marketing content or campaigns – across all channels – that tells the story of downtown as a visitor asset – in particular, why it fulfills the needs or expectations of a specific target market. Through the pandemic, the Massachusetts Office of Tourism and Travel had also raised intra-state marketing as a priority and has begun collaborating with local chambers of commerce and downtown organizations to better integrate local commercial districts and small businesses into its marketing campaigns.

### Develop an audience outreach plan for downtown marketing campaigns

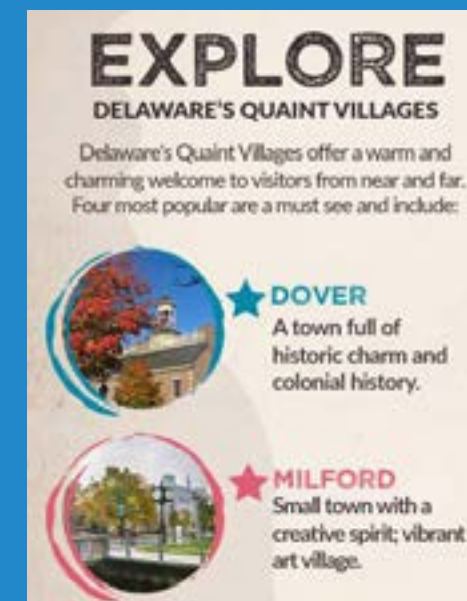
- Step 1: Define downtown marketing goals
- Step 2: Identify all tactics within each channel (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned) for each audience segment surrounding each goal
- Step 3: Justify the mix of tactics based on the most effective (reach, awareness and action)
- Step 4: Create frequency plan
- Step 5: Develop campaign testing and optimization stages
- Step 6: Set aside marketing budget

For more tactical marketing strategies, read the [RRP Marketing Toolkit](#).

### Case Study: Kent County DE “Quaint Villages”

In Kent County DE, the destination marketing organization, Kent County Tourism Corporation, engaged tourism and destination planning consultants Streetsense to work closely with municipality leaders to conduct market research and audience surveys to identify three target audience segments whose interests resonated with Kent County’s offerings. Informed by consumers, branding and marketing consultants, Streetsense, then strategically repositioned the destination with a compelling new name — Delaware’s Quaint Villages — and tagline, “At Your Own Pace”, which refocused audience awareness to the regions’ downtowns which features a mix of attractions – historic architecture, artist villages, state fairs, and competitive horse and car racing.

The evolved brand and marketing campaigns, after being implemented strategically across all communication channels including its new website, has resulted in tracked incremental return on marketing investments of \$18 Million, a return of \$47 for every marketing dollar invested, 19% increase in accommodation tax collections and visitor parties who collectively visited all 20 of its cities, towns and villages in Kent County. By the third fiscal year, website traffic increased by five times, opt-in subscribers to its newsletter increased by four times, social community engagement increased by more than 10%, and bed tax collections increased by 19%.





## We want to... Evaluate and measure success of tourism/hospitality strategies

Key Performance Indicator	Recommended Measurement Tool	<p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are measurements that express impact through numbers or ratios. KPIs are often difficult to measure and track as it often requires significant investment in human resource or technology. Statistically robust methods of performance tracking are not accessible for most organizations. However, it is important to measure the success and/or impact of investments/ improvements over time to make the case for future funding and resources.</p> <p>As such, <b>focus on “fit for use” measurements that can be tracked easily by your downtown staff or with support of tourism and hospitality partners with resources to dedicate towards performance evaluation.</b></p>
Total number of visitor trips	Placer.ai Arrivalist	
Tax revenues	State Department of Revenue	
Lodging occupancy rates	STR AirDNA	
Average daily rates of lodging		
Social Impressions and engagements (social likes, comments, clicks, shares, video views/ completions, website visitors, opt-in to travel guide and/ or newsletter, engagement with the attractions, events, or lodging pages)	Hootsuite Sprout Social	
Website performance (average time on site, pages per session)		
Business/Attraction reviews (total number, average rating)	Google Analytics	

Avoid KPIs that seek to measure business impacts owing to the difficulty of collecting accurate sales data and the widely understood challenges associated with determining causality between regional tourism efforts and initiatives and individual business impacts.

Ultimately, tracking and evaluating your destination's efforts should enable all partners involved (whether downtown leadership or regional tourism and hospitality organizations) figure out what's working, what's not, what needs to be fine-tuned in the future, as well as make the case for additional resources that may need to be obtained to further promote downtown and the region.

## Key Resources

# Key Resources

## Untapped Sources of Revenue through the Tourism Industry

The following sources of revenue are currently available to the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, Regional Tourism Councils, as well as local municipalities. These dollars may be used toward a mix of tourism programs and projects that directly/indirectly impact downtowns. Projects funded through these tax revenues may include infrastructure projects, real estate development/housing, branding and marketing campaigns, tourism asset improvements, and workforce programs. As such, it is important for downtown leaders to be aware of these funding resources in order to find strategic ways to work with major players in local tourism and hospitality who may already be accessing these funds.

Fee Category	State-Wide	Fee Cap for Hotel/Motel	Fee Cap for Short-Term Rental
State Room Occupancy Tax	●	5.7%	5.7%
Local Room Occupancy Tax	○	6%	6%
Water Protection Fund	○	2.75%	2.75%
Community Impact Fee	○	N/A	TBD
<b>Total:</b>		<b>14.45%</b>	<b>14.45%</b>

### State Room Occupancy Excise Tax

The state's room occupancy excise tax rate is levied at 5.7% for room rentals of 90 days or less in hotels, motels, bed and breakfast establishments, short term rentals, and lodging houses. All lodging operators are required to collect taxes from occupants (or visitors) when they collect rent and remit these amounts to the State Department of Revenue, although exemptions may apply to rooms that cost less than \$15 per day and lodging operators who rent out their property for fewer than 14 days in one calendar year. A portion of these funds are typically distributed back to the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism to help cover operating and program costs, including Regional Tourism Council allocations and competitive tourism grants.

## Calculate State + Local Room Occupancy Tax Impact on Visitor Receipt

Base Room Charge	<b>\$300.00</b>
Booking Fee	<b>\$25.00</b>
Total Rent	<b>\$325.00</b>
State Room Tax	<b>\$18.52</b> (5.7%)
Local Room Tax	<b>\$19.50</b> (6.0%)
<b>Total Amount Due:</b>	<b>\$363.02</b>

IN 2020

**Following industry-wide closures of hotels and other lodging businesses and the decline in room revenues by 67%, room occupancy tax collections in the Commonwealth fell 11.1% from 2019<sup>2</sup>.**

<sup>2</sup>MOTT 2020 Annual Report

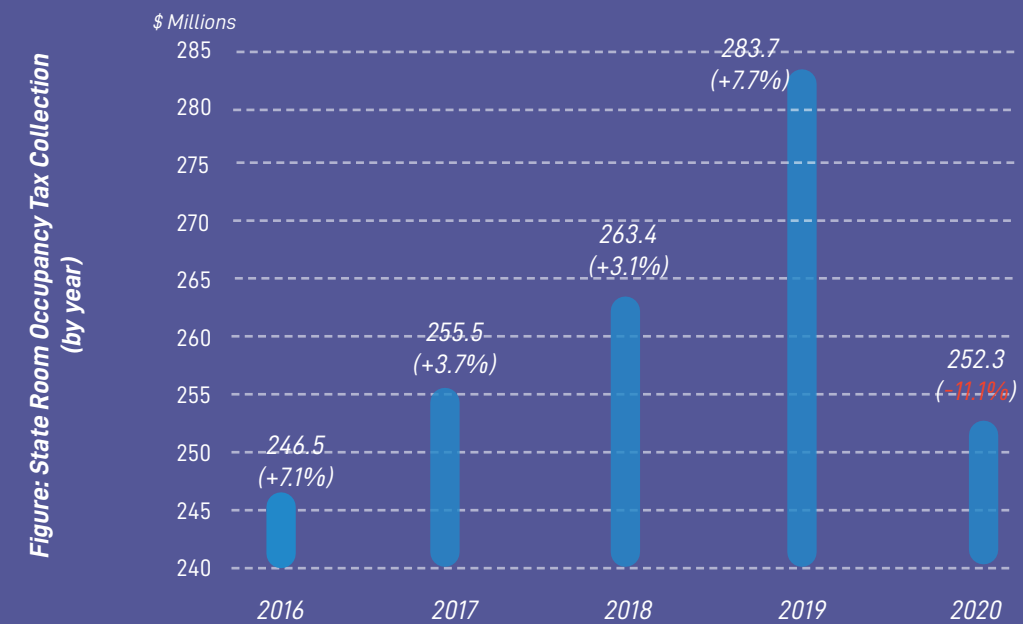


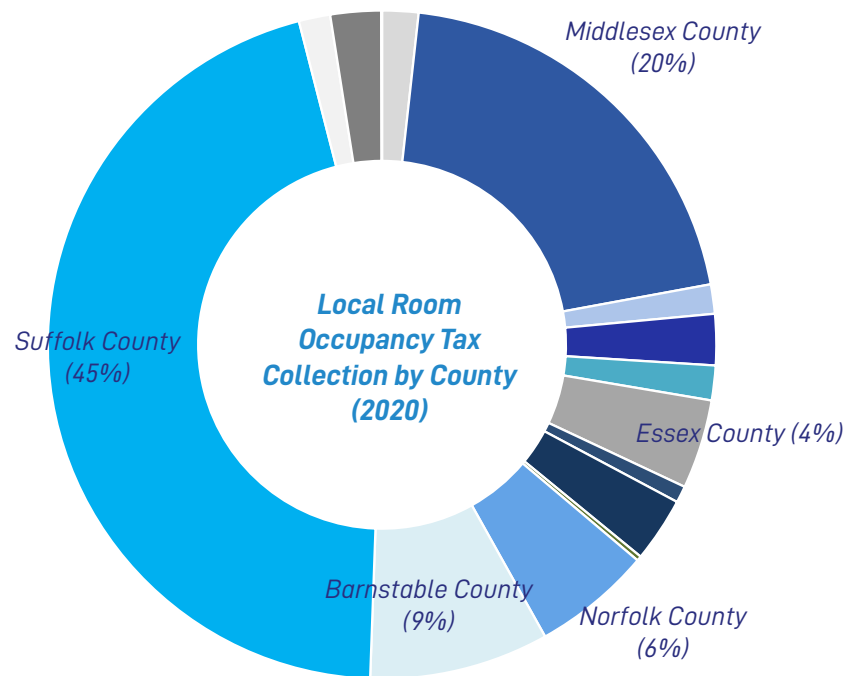
Figure: State Room Occupancy Tax Collection (by year)

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

**Local Room Occupancy Excise Tax**

In addition to state excise tax, Massachusetts cities and towns are also permitted to charge a local room occupancy tax of up to 6%. Local occupancy tax applies to properties that are bed and breakfast establishments, hotels, motels, lodging houses, and short-term rentals (in which at least one room is rented for 31 days or less in a year). In communities that adopt the tax, operators of these establishments must collect the excise tax and remit it to the state, along with the 5.7% state room occupancy excise. The Department of Revenue distributes these funds (in proportion to the amount of such sums received from each city or town) back to municipalities for use with local discretion. Often, these revenues become a part of a municipality's General Funds and expenditures are determined through annual budgeting processes.

The total amount of tax required to be collected depends on where the property is located. To find out the local room tax rate for your community, click [here](#).



Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

County	2020 Total
Plymouth	\$3,974,604
Middlesex	\$46,160,192
Bristol	\$3,215,409
Berkshire	\$5,603,170
Hampden	\$3,807,489
Essex	\$9,795,089
Hampshire	\$1,828,727
Worcester	\$7,106,094
Franklin	\$524,554
Norfolk	\$13,004,738
Barnstable	\$19,688,469
Suffolk	\$103,042,689
Dukes	\$3,443,980
Nantucket	\$5,553,748
Norfolk	\$86,380

**Water Protection Fund**

The Cape Cod and Islands Water Protection Fund (CCIWPF) was established by the State legislature to help Cape Cod and Islands cities and towns pay for wastewater infrastructure and water quality remediation projects by imposing a 2.75% excise tax on transfers of occupancy in hotels, motels, short-term rentals, lodging house, bed and breakfasts, and other types of lodging.

The fund is administered by the State's existing Clean Water Trust and overseen by a management

board comprised of representation from every member town from the region. Currently, the 15 Cape Cod communities are members of the fund.

**Community Impact Fee**

Beginning July 1, 2019, for short-term rentals only, cities and towns are permitted to charge an additional community impact fee of up to 3% if a lodging operator has more than one property in that locality or is renting an owner-occupied 2 or 3 family house on a short-term rental basis.

Thirty-five percent (35%) of the impact fee collected must be dedicated to affordable housing or local infrastructure projects. The balance of the local option community impact fee, the remaining 65%, will be general fund revenue of the city/town and may be appropriated for any municipal purpose. However, the city or town may, by legislative body vote, dedicate more than the required 35%, up to 100% of the local option community impact fees to affordable housing or local infrastructure projects. In that case, any amount not so dedicated will be general fund revenue. "A local infrastructure project" is a capital project for which a community could borrow. For example, the legislative body could fund the acquisition of a fire truck or to fund road improvements, but not to fund the payment of debt service.

## Tourism Destination Marketing Districts

Tourism Destination Marketing Districts (TDMD) are clearly defined geographic areas ("specified regions") in which a special assessment is levied against any hotel or motel within the district that is subject to room occupancy excise tax. Any region in the Commonwealth may form a Tourism District. These "special assessments" cannot exceed 2% of a hotel's or motel's total taxable rents, and will mirror that of the room occupancy excise.

The proceeds from the special assessment are pooled into a fund managed by an entity named by the Tourism District. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) is responsible for collecting this special assessment and the Massachusetts State Treasurer's Office then distributes these funds to the Tourism District's management entity on a quarterly basis.

### Key Steps to Forming a Tourism Destination Marketing District (TDMD)

- Step 1: Conduct stakeholder outreach and engagement to lodging businesses to build momentum and buy-in, and to begin understanding priority improvements for the district (Note: signatures of 62 per cent of the tourism destination marketing district members in the proposed tourism destination marketing district is required for a district petition to be filed)
- Step 2: Develop a proposed tourism destination marketing district plan, which sets forth the supplemental services and programs, update mechanism, criteria by which lodging businesses are assessed by the tourism destination marketing district, and budget and special assessment structures (Note: The plan is to be updated at least once every 5 years by the TDMD committee)
- Step 3: Lodging business owners within the proposed tourism destination marketing district should file a formal petition at the clerk's office in the city or town taking the lead in forming the district. The approval process is coordinated locally by the municipality taking the lead. All required approvals are granted at the municipal level.

For more information, visit [Tourism Destination Marketing District Fund FAQ](#)

### Case Study: Boston/Cambridge TDMD

*The Boston/Cambridge TDMD was established in 2021 and levies a special assessment of 1.5% on all lodging businesses with fifty (50) or more rooms located within the boundaries of the cities of Boston and Cambridge. This assessment is in addition to the State Room Occupancy tax of 5.7% and the Local Room Occupancy tax of 6.5% in Boston and 6.0% in Cambridge. The management entity of the district, the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau, will be directly reinvesting these funds back into "destination development, promotion and marketing" - as outlined in the district plan. This will include creating a reserve fund to help the tourism industry weather economic downturns, as well as programs and strategies that increase supplier and workforce pipeline diversity and that ultimately allow Greater Boston to be more competitive in luring visitors, meetings and events back post-pandemic.*



## Grants Opportunities *(as of December 2021)*

### **Travel, Tourism & Outdoor Recreation (Competitive Grants) - ROLLING**

Sector	Public (Federal)
Agency/ Organization	Economic Development Administration
Maximum Eligible Amount	\$10,000,000
Eligible Applicants	Eligible entities include a(n): (i) District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD); (ii) Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; (iii) State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; (iv) institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or (v) public or private non profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a general purpose political subdivision of a State. 42 U.S.C. § 3122(4)(A); 13 C.F.R. § 300.3.
Eligible Activities	<p>EDA will fund travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation projects that include non-construction and construction activities. For the most part, this component is intended to fund projects that are focused on new and expanded infrastructure, projects with a multi-state or national focus, and projects in regions most adversely affected by damage to the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation sectors from the coronavirus pandemic. Through this program, EDA can support both the development of travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation pandemic recovery strategies and the implementation of recovery projects, including in communities adjacent to National Park Service units, State Parks, National Marine Sanctuaries, and other natural destinations.</p> <p>This includes construction activities where the project is owned by the Eligible Applicant such as: Water and stormwater/wastewater improvements, Pier construction and improvements, New outdoor recreation and trail infrastructure and public access enhancements, Nature-based infrastructure projects to improve access to recreation, Cultural, arts, and tourism facilities (e.g., visitor or tourist information centers), Workforce training facilities and capacity building programs, Accessibility enhancements, and Country-wide or multi-state travel, tourism, or outdoor recreation promotion.</p>

For more information, visit [EDA Grant Opportunities](#).

### **Travel & Tourism Recovery Grant Program - OPEN**

Sector	Public (State)
Agency/ Organization	Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism
Maximum Eligible Amount	\$50,000-\$150,000
Eligible Applicants	<p>Eligible entities include a(n): public agency, municipality, or nonprofit organization incorporated in Massachusetts with 501(c)3, 501(c)5, 501(c)6, status that produce, promote, or present tourism attractions and activities for the public and/or provide public access to physical collections and exhibits.</p> <p>Applicants will be allowed to indicate if project was developed through Rapid Recovery Program.</p>
Eligible Activities	Eligible projects include: Marketing content/asset development; Visitor/consumer outreach; Digital advertising, paid social media, broadcast, radio; Design/Production of Posters, banners, signage, billboards; Photography, b-roll video footage; Language translation of marketing materials; Cultural tourism/multicultural tourism; Sustainable tourism; Green/Blue Economy tourism; Agritourism marketing; Special event programming; Website upgrades - development, optimization, mobilization

### **Destination Development Capital Program - OPEN**

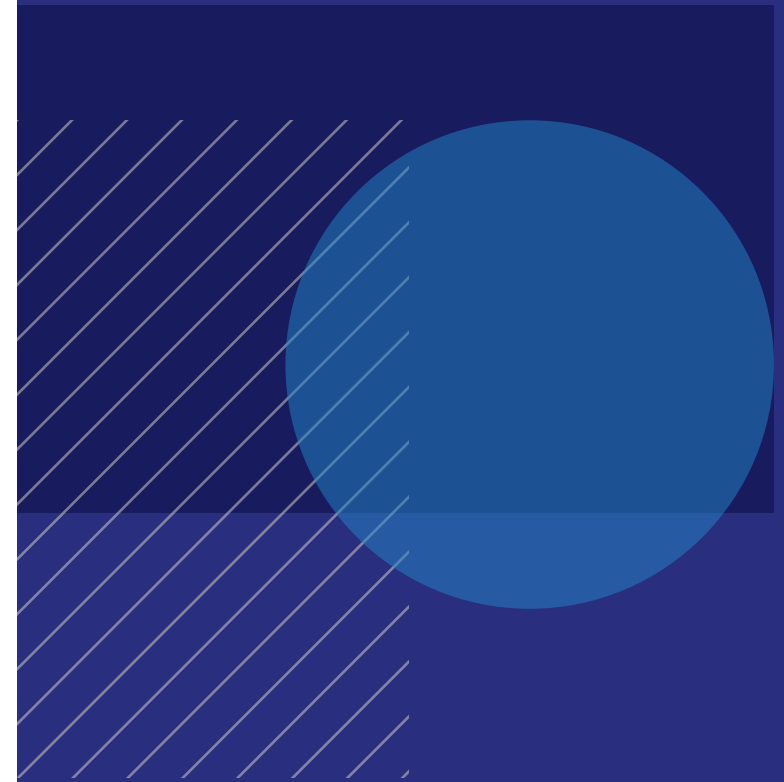
Sector	Public (State)
Agency/ Organization	Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism
Maximum Eligible Amount	\$250,000
Eligible Applicants	<p>Eligible entities include a(n): public agency, municipality, or nonprofit organization incorporated in Massachusetts with 501(c)3, 501(c)5, 501(c)6, status</p> <p>Priority will be given to RRP Projects.</p>
Eligible Activities	Eligible projects will enhance tourism resources and infrastructure and will aid in destination recovery and resiliency. Applications will be accepted for projects that include plans to expand, construct, restore or renovate Massachusetts tourism destinations and attractions. .

For more information, visit [MQTT](#).

**Mass Trails Grant - OPEN**

Sector	Public (State)
Agency/ Organization	Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation
Maximum Eligible Amount	\$100,000 (up to \$300,000 for regional networks)
Eligible Applicants	Public entities and non-profit organizations (with documented land owner permission and community support)
Eligible Activities	Eligible projects to design, create, and maintain the diverse network of trails, trail systems, and trails experiences for outdoor recreation.

For more information, visit [Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation](#).



**For more information, visit:**  
[www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program)

If you have questions about the RRP program, contact:

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