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# LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

When Destinations International (DI) announced Tampa, Florida, as the destination for our 2024 Annual Convention, the choice sparked discussion among our members due to anti-DEI legislation enacted in the State of Florida. Some suggested we move the event to another destination.

While we remained convinced that Tampa was the ideal location for our convention, we understood the importance of addressing these concerns. It occurred to us this was an opportunity to illustrate and validate our belief that travel boycotts prevent us from showing up, immersing in and positively impacting the communities visited.

Following a series of discussions with the Destinations International association and foundation board members, our leadership team; board chairs Fred Dixon and Ellie Westman Chin; Dr. Rickey Thigpen, board member and CEO of Visit Jackson; John Tanzella, President and CEO of IGLTA; and Santiago C. Corrada, President & CEO of Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) met with Mayor Jane Castor. These conversations set the stage for the concept of the "Tampa Case Study."

Our goal was simple: to demonstrate how our Annual Convention could make a positive and enduring impact on the local community. In essence, we extended an invitation to our industry members to unite in Tampa, embracing diversity as a strength and proving that active engagement is more impactful than boycotting.

The results speak for themselves. The 2024 Annual Convention was DI's largest ever, with nearly 2,000 attendees, including participants from over 30 countries. We worked with local vendors and non-profits, engaged with diverse communities and measured the direct local economic impact — an estimated \$3.78 million, including lodging, food & beverage, retail, recreation and other spending. We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from both attendees and the Tampa community.

So many people contributed to the success of this effort. A particularly heartfelt thank you is owed to Mayor Jane Castor, Santiago Corrada and his amazing VTB team, John Tanzella, the Tourism Cares team, the Legacy Collective team, Feeding Tampa Bay and Yvette Lewis, President of the NAACP Hillsborough County Branch. They were engaged and supportive every step of the way, showing the importance and impact of strong and visionary leadership.

We hope this case study serves as an informative and actionable document for destination organizations, meeting planners, policy makers and everyone interested in fostering the potential of travel to engage the community in powerful ways. Together, we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

Don Welsh

President & CEO

Destinations International

WESC

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, Destinations International (DI) chose Tampa Bay as the host for its 2024 Annual Convention. Amid challenges posed by the political climate and legislation in Florida that was widely viewed as unwelcoming, DI dedicated to engage. Rather than boycott the city, DI leveraged the Annual Convention to highlight how welcoming the Tampa Region is.

This case study explores the strategies, activations, and outcomes of this engagement, showing how DI successfully created meaningful connections and left a positive legacy in Tampa. It is divided into three parts to provide meeting planners and destination professionals in sales, services, marketing, and community engagement roles with information on how to leave a legacy and engage the community in powerful ways.

A toolkit has been developed to accompany this case study, providing destination professionals and business events strategists with the methodology to replicate impact engagements similar to those outlined in each part of this case study.

Tampa is a thriving city located on Florida's Gulf Coast known for its vibrant cultural scene, diverse population, and robust economy. With a population of almost 400,000 residents, Tampa is part of the larger Tampa Bay metropolitan area, which is home to more than 3 million people. The city's rich cultural tapestry is reflected in its diverse communities, which include significant Hispanic, African American, Asian and LGBTQ+ populations.

Tampa is also recognized for its commitment to inclusivity and community engagement, with numerous initiatives supporting minority-owned businesses and fostering cultural exchange. The city's dynamic blend of historic charm and modern innovation, combined with its strong emphasis on community, makes Tampa an ideal location for events that celebrate diversity and local entrepreneurship.





Tampa Bay skyline

## INTRODUCTION

In July 2023, Destinations International (DI) faced a considerable amount of concern from its members when Tampa Bay, Florida, was announced as the destination for its 2024 Annual Convention. Members expressed their sentiments to 'boycott' the destination due to the political climate and anti-DEI legislation in the state. In response to addressing these concerns, the DI team, with directive from Board Chairs Fred Dixon and Ellie Westman Chin, took the opportunity to highlight the importance of engaging communities in the Tampa Bay region affected by legislation rather than boycotting a destination based on mainstream perception. For more information about DI's position on boycott and bans, refer to the 2017 report entitled "The Weaponization of Travel."

Business events, including Di's Annual Convention, have a tremendous impact on local economies and community members employed in the industry. The Events Industry Council's 2023 report, "The Economic Significance of Business Events," found that in 2019 business events globally supported 10.9 million jobs directly and 27.5 million jobs indirectly. Events contributed to \$1.2 trillion in direct spending and contributed \$1.6 trillion to global GDP. This data demonstrates that events are significant contributors to community vitality.

This case study provides in-depth insight into the pre, during, and post Annual Convention planning and engagement strategies with Visit Tampa Bay (VTB), our Tampa Case Study working group, small businesses and community stakeholders. These efforts led to inclusive experiences for attendees and created positive impacts for a variety of local community members affected by anti-DEI legislation. Readers are encouraged to apply learnings from this case study to balance business-first outcomes with thoughtful messaging and communication needed to alleviate boycott concerns and drive attendance.

#### Integration of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

<u>The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals</u> serve as a framework to achieve peace, prosperity and inclusion around the world.

DI adopted seven Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the 2024 Annual Convention:

#### 1 SDG 4: Quality Education

Annual Convention ensured inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for knowledge exchange, professional development, and skill enhancement.

#### 2 SDG 5: Gender Equality

Annual Convention generated direct income for women employed in industry, and women-owned businesses involved as suppliers throughout the event.

#### 3 SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Annual Convention generated direct income for hospitality workers in the Tampa Bay community and for small businesses engaged throughout the event.

#### 4 SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

Annual Convention engaged and included underrepresented communities throughout planning and execution.

#### 5 SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Annual Convention promoted Tampa's diverse cultural heritage through programming and activations.

#### 6 SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Annual Convention brought together people of diverse backgrounds, fostering tolerance and understanding.

#### 7 SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Annual Convention harnessed the expertise and involvement of partners to achieve working group goals and produce an inclusive event experience.

These goals were integrated into planning processes to ensure DI focused on long-term, socially responsible practices that extend beyond the event itself. Supporting the local economy and raising awareness about global issues that resonate with attendees from all destinations was essential to creating legacy impact.

## 2024 ANNUAL CONVENTION IMPACT

1,860

Attendees

168

International Delegates

30

**Countries and Territories** 

\$3.78M

Estimated direct economic impact for the Tampa Bay community

\$5,580

Raised for Local Community Organizations

4.75M

Select media coverage in 9 outlets (UVM\*)

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS





Welcome signage including languages of Convention attendees

PART ONE: JULY 2023 - JULY 2024

## PRE-ANNUAL CONVENTION STRATEGIC PLANNING

Planning for impact and legacy initiatives started 12 months in advance of the Annual Convention in Tampa with conversations among Destinations International (DI) executive team board chairs and the executive team at Visit Tampa Bay (VTB).

Four critical questions were discussed in this initial stage:

- What groups are most affected by anti-DEI legislation?
- What are the critical issues facing Tampa?
- Who do we need to engage in our planning efforts?
- What outcomes do we want to achieve with the attendee experience in our destination?

Initial responses to these questions established the foundation for engaging elected officials, community stakeholders, and developing a working group committed to creating lasting impact for residents of Tampa.

Part One provides detailed information about the planning process prior to Annual Convention, outlining the background insights of each step, stakeholders involved, expected outcomes of the action and defined success metrics for each step of our process.

Business events professionals and meeting planners are encouraged to develop a scalable roadmap for strategic planning. By considering booking patterns, event timelines and external influences such as government elections, media portrayal or climate, planners can best align their event objectives to the organization or industry's larger mission, secure buy-in from leadership, and drive attendance.

#### **Engage Elected Officials**

In September 2023, the executive teams of Destinations International (DI) and Visit Tampa Bay (VTB), Board Chairs Fred Dixon and Ellie Westman Chin, Visit Jackson CEO Dr. Rickey Thigpen and President & CEO John Tanzella of the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) met with Mayor Jane Castor to discuss the perception of Tampa and how DI's Annual Convention could create a positive impact by engaging the community as opposed to supporting efforts to boycott the destination.

#### Why this is important:

Engaging elected officials at all levels and having candid conversations about the enabling environment, along with perceptions of a destination, creates opportunities for honest discussion and ideas on how to create sustainable impact through interventions.

#### **Intended Impact:**

A working group was established to identify community impact activations and to educate attendees about the destination. Group members included destination organization representatives, organizations that support underrepresented voices and organizations that support legacy initiatives.

#### **Success Metrics:**

To develop thoughtfully curated activations with local community members impacted by legislation throughout the Annual Convention.



Left to right: Santiago Corrada, Jack Johnson, Rickey Thigpen, Ellie Westman Chin, Mayor Jane Castor, Fred Dixon, Gretchen Hall, John Tanzella, Don Welsh

#### **Establish a Working Group**

A working group was established, comprising ten individuals from organizations, inclusive of DI's Social Inclusion and Events teams. The group held meetings every six weeks to share ideas about the type of activations that could create the greatest impact for the community. As these ideas were refined and decided upon, the regular cadence of meetings for the working group shifted to discussion of progress with the respective responsibilities and how to measure impact.

#### Why this is important:

Creating a working group that represents the host organization, event planners, destination organization representatives and niche community perspectives is essential for success because it ensures decisions are informed by real insights rather than assumptions.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Engaging in meaningful discussions about designing intentional activations that tackle issues vital to the community. This provided an opportunity for open, honest conversations about what genuine impact looks like and how to address the community's most pressing concerns.

#### **Success Metrics:**

To identify activations that educate, immerse and connect attendees to issues that are important for the community.





Destinations International elevates tourism by educating, equipping, empowering and connecting its members to better fulfill their missions and achieve positive results around the world Visit Tampa Bay fosters vibrant economic development for the community by promoting visitation and creating meaningful connections that transcend politics.







Tourism Cares unites the travel industry, serving as a catalyst for positive social, environmental, and economic impact for the people and places of travel.

Legacy Collective works to solve systemic issues by funding the most sustainable, innovative efforts through partnerships with nonprofit organizations locally and globally. The mission of IGLTA is to provide information and resources for LGBTQ+ travelers and expand LGBTQ+ tourism globally by demonstrating its significant social and economic impact.

#### Create the Narrative

The working group recognized the importance of building a case study to guide the industry on how to create meaningful impact for community members through business events. A strong, shared narrative is essential to tell an impactful story. Destinations International (DI) identified the story by considering the following questions:

- What are we trying to achieve at the Annual Convention?
- What kind of impact do we want to create?
- What examples can we set for our members to use in their destinations?

By reflecting on these questions, DI crafted a narrative that emphasizes the impact of local engagement through inclusive and proactive discussions with the working group and community representatives.

#### Why this is important:

Carefully considering the overall purpose of our initiatives and activations helps guide and shape the activities we design, ensuring that attendees can connect with the local community in a meaningful and authentic way.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Crafting a clear narrative ensured that all stakeholders understood our vision for the Annual Convention and recognized how their roles and contributions were essential to its successful execution.

#### **Success Metrics:**

To create an experience at Annual Convention where:

- Attendees feel engaged and connected with the community
- Attendees learn about issues that affect the people and economy of Tampa
- Destination members are inspired to duplicate efforts locally

Tampa Bay is a destination that embraces people of all backgrounds and abilities. By collaborating with Visit Tampa Bay and engaging local stakeholders, we identified and understood key issues vital to the well-being of the local community. The relationships the Tampa team has cultivated over time enabled DI to connect our audience to the profound human impact an event like this can have.

#### **Board Engagement and Approval**

Destinations International (DI) Association and Foundation board chairs Fred Dixon and Ellie Westman Chin engaged in conversations, met with Mayor Castor and provided feedback on initiatives that could leave a legacy in Tampa. The Association and Foundation boards were also heavily involved, contributing ideas and receiving regular progress updates in executive committee and joint board meetings. Santiago Corrada, President & CEO of Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) and DI Association Board Director, were available to address questions about DI's selection of organizations and activations, ensuring the boards were fully invested in the initiatives being proposed.

#### Why this is important:

Direct board engagement is crucial because it ensures that the strategic direction and initiatives are aligned with the organization's mission and values. By actively participating in the planning process, the board not only can provide, but also help build consensus and buy-in, which are essential for the event success. Their engagement also signals strong leadership commitment, which is vital for securing the support of other stakeholders and ensuring that the community-focused initiatives have a meaningful and lasting impact.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Utilizing board director and trustee insights to identify activations to engage attendees, educate them on the importance of giving back to the community and deepen their understanding of local issues along with obtaining their buy-in.

#### **Success Metrics:**

To keep board directors and trustees appraised of the inclusion-aligned developments and to obtain feedback and buy-in from the Association and Foundation boards.

#### **Choose Intentional Community-Driven Activations**

The working group considered ways to integrate DI's <u>Social Inclusion framework</u> into activations, reflecting on topics critical to the tourism industry and the community, particularly with communities affected by the anti-DEI legislation.

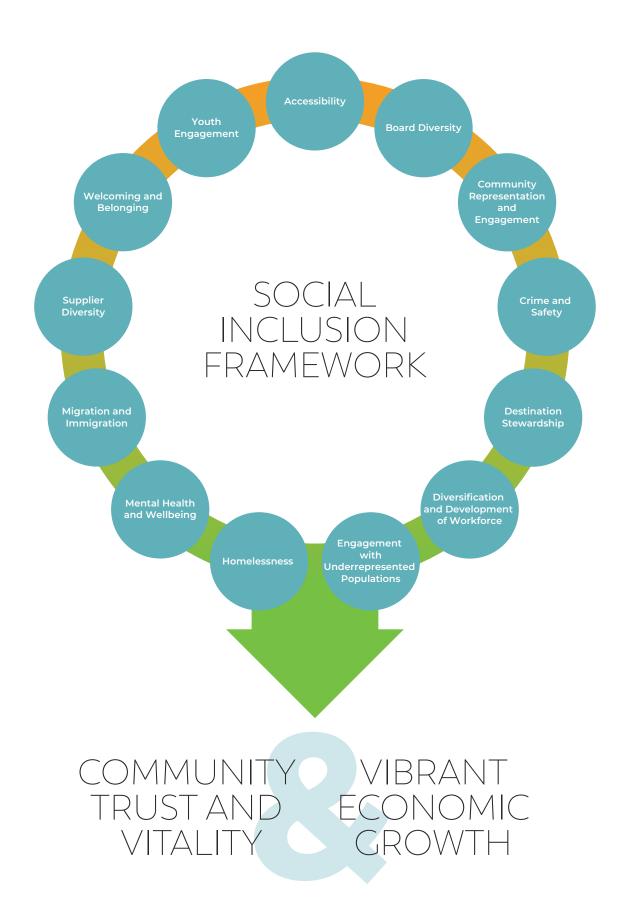
Topics chosen from the framework included accessibility, community representation and engagement, engagement with underrepresented populations, supplier diversity, welcoming and belonging and youth engagement.

After choosing topics from the framework, the working group aimed to identify organizations making a significant impact on the community. Criteria included:

- How the mission and vision align with the social inclusion framework
- The capacity to reach diverse and underserved members of the community
- The kind of impact the organization has upon the community, with a focus on hospitality workers.

The Visit Tampa Bay team identified three organizations that best aligned with these criteria:

- Feeding Tampa Bay
- Dress for Success Tampa Bay
- Rebuilding Together Tampa Bay



#### Vetting Criteria Examples:

Legacy Collective (LC), a third-party organization, vetted the non-profits to ensure they met the following standards.

- Being a qualified 501c3 not-for-profit organization in good standing with the Internal Revenue Services (IRS). (Per United States based laws)
- The grant addresses a systemic issue with a sustainable and innovative solution.
- The organization prohibits discrimination of any type protected by federal, state, or local laws in their hiring practices, employment practices, and client services.
- The organization promotes a diverse and inclusive culture.
- The grant request demonstrates that the funding will move the organizational mission forward during a startup or program expansion phase.

- The grant request cannot be used to fund existing operational budget expenses.
- The grants cannot support memberships, dues, admission to events or goods bought at auction, or anything of more than incidental benefit.
- The grant request provides clear budget requirements and timeline milestones for progress towards the stated objective.
- The organization can provide progress updates and initiative completion reporting, pictures/video or site visits.

As the vetting process took place, the working group discussed the types of impactful engagements that attendees would find valuable. Ideas discussed included:

- An offsite immersion addressing topics affecting the destination
- Educating attendees about topics important to the destination
- · Finding ways to actively engage attendees to learn about community-aligned topics
- Opportunities to donate to organizations
- Investing in local minority-owned business

The working group assessed experiential ideas alongside recommended charitable organizations to make the following decisions:

#### Offsite Immersion Experience:

This activation is a powerful way to engage with the local community. Offsite immersions serve as an opportunity to learn about issues affecting the destination's vitality.

Community Representation and Engagement

#### **Experiential Considerations:**

Feeding Tampa Bay was chosen to highlight the issue of food insecurity, including among frontline hospitality workers. Their offsite immersion experience demonstrates how the organization provides healthy meals to food-insecure residents and other services.

#### **Event Planning Considerations:**

Capacity of the facility to host at least 50 people, quality of educational tours and volunteer activations, distance from the hotel, transportation options and timing of the immersion to maximize attendance and interest.

#### Community Impact Initiative:

This activation led by Legacy Collective was designed to engage attendees by encouraging them to learn about Feeding Tampa Bay, Dress for Success Tampa Bay and Rebuilding Together Tampa Bay. Attendees would vote for the organization they would like donations to be contributed to.

#### **Experiential Considerations:**

Out of all donations to this initiative, 50% of the proceeds would be donated to Feeding Tampa Bay. Attendees would have the opportunity to contribute the remaining 50% to Dress for Success Tampa Bay and Rebuilding Together Tampa Bay to encourage attendees to learn about the mission of these organizations and to be involved in making a difference in the lives of community members of Tampa.

#### **Event Planning Considerations:**

Legacy Collective notified the organizations that they were selected, created an online portal for attendees to vote on which nonprofits to fund, and issued the grants after the voting period ended. A donation page was also created for attendees who wanted to support any of the selected organizations on the Destinations International (DI) site, and this link was shared on the Annual Convention microsite. Contributions were made by DI, Visit Tampa Bay, and Legacy Collective.

Though Legacy Collective is no longer in operation, DI encourages readers to explore this concept and consider how to implement a similar initiative in their own destinations. More information is provided in the toolkit.



#### A local 'Sunset Market' Experience:

The Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) Team curated an experience comprised of minorityowned local businesses for attendees and members of the public to purchase local beverages, goods and gifts.

#### **Experiential Considerations:**

23 diverse small businesses were selected for this event in front of the VTB Visitors Center for attendees and the public.

#### **Event Planning Considerations:**

The planning process for the Sunset Market focused on creating an inclusive and community-driven event that highlighted VTB's diverse partners: local businesses. Key considerations included ensuring representation from minority-owned vendors, creating a welcoming and vibrant atmosphere, and aligning with VTB's city's broader goals of supporting local entrepreneurship. VTB also prioritized accessibility, both in terms of location and event layout, to ensure that the market was approachable and enjoyable for all attendees. The vision was centered around fostering community engagement while providing a platform for underrepresented businesses to shine.

#### Youth Engagement and Shadowing Opportunities:

As outlined in the Destinations International (DI) Workforce Diversification and Retention Strategy, exposing young leaders in high school to career opportunities in the travel industry is critical to developing a pipeline of talent. The DI/VTB team wanted to align with organizations that support underrepresented youth.

**Experiential Considerations:** 

The VTB team connected DI and the President of the NAACP Hillsborough Branch. An in-person meeting established alignment and trust, explored areas of need and identified a shadowing activation that would benefit high school students curious about the travel industry but unsure how their interests align.

#### Event Planning considerations:

The NAACP identified three students to participate in an onsite shadow experience and provided DI with their backgrounds, interests and skills. DI used this information to create intentional and well-rounded schedules for each student to ensure a meaningful experience.





#### Meaningful Travel Map:

This map, powered by Tourism Cares, provided attendees with information on socially conscious businesses specializing in products, services experiences or tours that attendees support when visiting a destination. Businesses can be added to the map at any time after being vetted, and the map serves as a lasting resource that can be utilized for future events.

Destination Stewardship

#### **Experiential Considerations:**

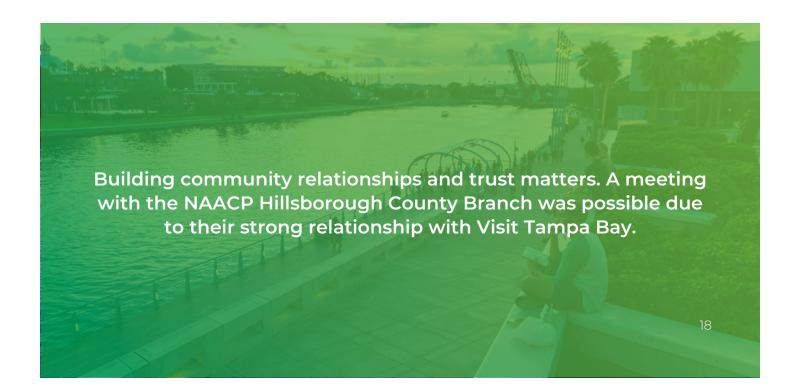
The goal of this activation was to inform attendees about a range of socially conscious businesses, encouraging them to invest in, support and raise awareness for locally owned enterprises.

#### **Event Planning Considerations:**

The host destination identifies businesses, restaurants, tours and other attractions that meet the criteria for the Meaningful Travel Map. Businesses complete an application that outlines their values, which Tourism Cares reviews in collaboration with the destination. Approved, "visitor-ready" businesses are then added to the map.

#### Vetting Criteria Examples:

- Engagement with community to create a positive impact
- Disburse economic benefit of travel to communities that do not traditionally receive tourism dollars, and to underrepresented populations
- Business model, mission and messaging centered around sustainability and regeneration, diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility practices, or the protection and preservation of local cultural heritage assets





A street view of Ybor City

#### Supplier/Vendor Diversity Selections:

The Destinations International (DI) and Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) teams worked together to identify minority-owned businesses for amenities, venues, transportation and wellness activities offered at the Annual Convention.

#### **Experiential Considerations:**

Minority-owned businesses bring unique products, services and cultural perspectives that add value to the event. DI aimed to enhance the attendee experience by offering a wider range of culturally rich options that reflected the community's heritage.

#### **Event Planning Considerations:**

The DI events team mapped out the course of events and vendor needs with the VTB team. The respective teams worked together to identify options that incorporated minority-owned businesses and ensured these venues were accessible during site visits.

#### Small Business Membership for Minority Owned Businesses:

This pilot program invited two tourism-aligned diverse small businesses to become DI business members through the end of the year in exchange for utilizing their services before, during and after Annual Convention. The aim of this pilot program was to reduce barriers to entry to engage with the DI community, its year-round member benefits and the Annual Convention event for diverse small businesses while highlighting their expertise in the industry.



#### **Experiential Considerations:**

The DI team wanted to offer an opportunity for diverse small businesses to meet with attendees and showcase their business' services and expertise.

#### **Event Planning Considerations:**

As the event experience is developed or outlined, identify opportunities to incorporate diverse small businesses. Look for small businesses within your community networks that specialize in the services or products that align with the needs of the event and may align with social inclusion pillars. Incorporate identification tags into your partner programs and tools to track, engage with, and measure the impact of diverse businesses.

#### Why this is important:

The working group combined topics from the social inclusion framework with a range of activations that attendees could easily engage with and learn from. This approach aligns with authentic learning experiences and is true to the destination's character. Strategies and decisions aligned to the core operational cycles of event planning, including sourcing, site visits and attendee engagement.

#### **Intended Impact:**

To thoughtfully and naturally engage attendees in raising awareness, fostering opportunities for immersion, encouraging engagement, inspiring action and driving investment in the local Tampa Bay community, all while ensuring attendees authentically feel welcomed.

#### **Success Metrics:**

A variety of metrics were discussed, including attendance to the immersion experience engaging in the voting process for the selected organizations, attendance and purchasing of local goods from the Sunset Market experience, a positive student shadowing experience and organic attendee feedback and positive feedback from the post event survey.

DJ T. Couture at Annual Convention



#### **Develop a Communications Strategy**

With an initial messaging framework and activations in place, Destinations International (DI) developed a communications strategy highlighting our community-first approach in Tampa. This strategy extended to social media, local media alerts, media briefings and interviews, press releases and identifying journalists and media outlets from a variety of backgrounds.

#### Why this is important:

A communications plan is essential because it ensures that all the efforts and initiatives are effectively conveyed to the right audiences given the depth and breadth of the work involved—such as engaging local stakeholders, integrating social inclusion frameworks, and supporting minority-owned businesses.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Our goals for a thoughtful communications plan included increased visibility and awareness about the importance of engaging with the local community when a destination is faced with unwelcoming legislation, in turn encouraging attendee engagement and trust.

#### **Success Metrics:**

The goals of the communications plan were to increase media coverage, boost attendance for people who were reluctant to attend the Annual Convention, enhance social media engagement, improve stakeholder satisfaction and to set an example for how business events can positively contribute to the wellbeing of a community.

The power of inclusive communication lies in its ability to reshape narratives, build trust and bring communities together.

#### **Activating the Communications Strategy**



DI's Communications team gathered examples of engagements and activations and planned the capture of content during the event to create a series of stories that amplify a connection to the people of Tampa and create an atmosphere for all attendees to feel welcome despite anti-DEI legislation in Florida.

#### Why this is important:

DI's strategy and storytelling content connect attendees to the community of Tampa, demonstrating a human connection over politics.

#### **Intended Impact:**

To create a sense of safety and belonging for attendees and prospective attendees through stories shared on DI's blog, social and traditional media, and to share messages with residents about the importance that DI and its members place on welcoming and belonging.

#### **Success Metrics:**

DI attendees feel welcome at the Annual Convention and learn about the impact they can create by engaging the local community. The local community is aware of DI's position and efforts.

#### **Using the Social Impact Assessment Tool**

Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) completed the Destinations International (DI) <u>Social Impact Assessment</u> to establish baseline metrics for measuring success in their commitment to inclusive practices. Completing this assessment is a requirement within the request for proposal (RFP) criteria when selecting locations for Destinations International events. VTB scored well above the best practice ranges in all categories.

#### Why this is important:

Data are a cornerstone of change. VTB's commitment to inclusion is evident both in the assessment results and in their demonstration of inclusive and community-focused efforts for the Annual Convention

#### **Intended Impact:**

Results from VTB's Social Impact Assessment Tool accurately portray community trust and engagement, a commitment to vendor diversity and prioritization of accessibility initiatives.

#### **Success Metrics:**

High percentages within each category of the Social Impact Assessment Tool are reflected in the output of activations for the Annual Convention. Impact metrics can be positioned by destinations when participating in business events sales cycles, demonstrating the destination's commitment to inclusion.





Tampa Bay waterfront

PART TWO: JULY 16 - 18, 2024

## ANNUAL CONVENTION

Planning efforts from July 2023 through June 2024 generated alignment, enthusiasm, buy-in and active engagement from all stakeholders. The Destination International (DI) Annual Convention agenda and communications prepared attendees for a welcoming and inclusive experience. Attendees registered for the immersion experience, and upon arrival were warmly embraced by Tampa and its community. These experiences showcase DI and VTB's commitment to inclusivity and the significance of building strong community-centered relationships.

Part Two describes Annual Convention activation in greater detail with information on how activations took place, the organizations involved and impact metrics.

#### **Event Schedule**

#### Monday

Global site visit to Visit Tampa Bay Offices

#### Tuesday

Offsite Immersive Experience at Feeding Tampa Bay

Welcome reception at Sparkman Wharf

#### Wednesday

Sessions

NAACP students shadow

Sunset Market Event

#### Thursday

Sessions

NAACP students shadow

Closing event at Ybor City

#### **Immersion Experience**



The Feeding Tampa Bay immersion experience was created by the DI Foundation to provide attendees with first-hand knowledge and awareness of the realities of food insecurity with a particular focus on how frontline hospitality workers struggle with food insecurity. The organization offers educational tours of its facility and café, as well as volunteer opportunities that contribute to the well-being of the community.

During their three-hour visit, Annual Convention attendees had the opportunity to learn how Feeding Tampa Bay accomplishes their mission to provide 154 million meals every year, how they offer workforce development training and how they welcome volunteers.

#### Why this is important:

Destinations International (DI) and Visit Tampa Bay aimed to create a memorable offsite experience where attendees could learn, empathize, and recognize that their own destinations face similar challenges. DI and the working group wanted to inspire attendees with ideas on how to incorporate a community-aligned immersion experience through their own meetings and events.

#### **Intended Impact:**

To have 50 attendees participate in this immersion experience, to make a true difference in the community and to inspire volunteers to replicate this experience in their own destination.

#### **Success Metrics:**

39 volunteers packaged more than 10,000 potatoes, enough to prepare over 9,000 meals for the community. Other success metrics include local media coverage which reached a broad audience across Hillsborough County.

Annual attendees pose outside of Feeding Tampa Bay





#### 'Community Impact Initiative' Contributions

Representation **Engagement** 

As an effort to support multiple organizations that uplift the local community, the working group decided that a community impact initiative platform was the most fun and effective way to engage the audience to learn about the mission of the two additional charities.

Onsite promotion for this community impact initiative included the purpose behind the voting platform and encouragement to vote for the organization of choice at the Destinations International (DI) board meeting, in committee meetings, and on the main stage with the respective CEOs of DI and Visit Tampa Bay (VTB). Daily reminders to vote were included in the daily newsletters, and push notifications were sent via the Annual Convention app.

#### Why this is important:

Purposeful financial contributions are highly beneficial to local organizations. can learn about and vote It is essential to create a mechanism that allows attendees to easily and enjoyably learn about and contribute to these organizations.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Creating a community impact initiative where attendees for organizations they wish to support and potentially replicate in their own destinations.

#### **Success Metrics:**

226 votes were cast. \$1,200 was donated to Feeding Tampa Bay, and the remaining \$1,200 was donated to Rebuilding Together Tampa Bay and Dress For Success. Contributions to each of these organizations were allocated based on the percentage of votes each organization received.

# ATTENDEES ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY IMPACT INITIATIVE

7,002

**Email Impressions** 

1,621

Mobile App Downloads

44

Clicks on the *Giving Circle* Link and Links to Organization Websites

193

Clicks to the *Community Impact Initiative*Tab in the Mobile App

#### Sunset Market Local Event

Engagement with Underrepresented Populations The Sunset Market event, held on the plaza outside the Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) Visitor Center, created an opportunity for attendees to support local businesses and the local economy. This event took place Wednesday afternoon, before an evening of partner-hosted events, and attracted over 300 attendees.

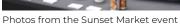
The Sunset Market event exemplifies a successful community-focused initiative aimed at supporting local and minority-owned businesses. This vibrant gathering

featured a diverse array of local minority owned vendors offering unique products and culinary experiences, creating a dynamic marketplace atmosphere. Attendees were invited to explore and purchase from local artisans and food and beverage partners while enjoying the scenic sunset backdrop. The event not only fostered local economic growth but also underscored the importance of community engagement and support for diverse entrepreneurs, aligning with broader goals of inclusivity and community development.











#### Why this is important:

Destinations International (DI) and the Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) team were able to work together to support small and minority owned businesses in a fun and engaging manner.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Encourage investments in the local economy, particularly in minority-owned businesses, and create opportunities for meaningful connections with the local community.

#### **Success Metrics:**

The event featured 23 small business vendors from various diverse communities. Vendors included representatives from Women-owned, LGBTQ+, Hispanic, Black, Veteran and Asian-Pacific backgrounds, highlighting the event's commitment to inclusivity and support for underrepresented groups. While a precise overall financial impact for the event is not yet available, the Unlock Tampa Bay store generated \$1,715 in revenue. This is five times the usual revenue collected during that time, and direct proceeds were donated to Feeding Tampa Bay. Revenue highlights the event's success and its positive economic impact on local businesses. In addition to the direct feedback from vendors and attendees, the VTB team is also seeking insights on the broader media and community impact of the event. Preliminary results indicate that the event was shared on 15 vendor social media accounts with nearly 5,000 views for each story.





Attendees celebrate at Madame Fortune, a diverse venue selected for the Closing Reception

#### **Diverse Vendor and Supplier Initiatives**



The Destinations International (DI) events team was very intentional about sourcing and selecting venues for the convention. The team looked for venues that are minority owned, fulfilled capacity requirements and fit within our experiential expectations. DI also worked with Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) to engage with local vendors for amenities and referrals to small business establishments to support the local economy.

Diverse vendors and suppliers represented included:

- On Point Events Group (Transportation)
- 7th and Grove (Closing Reception Venue)
- Madame Fortune (Closing Reception Venue)
- T. Couture (DJ)
- Darcie Milfort (Yoga)

Dl's communications team and media partners engaged with vendors to highlight stories about their journey.

#### Why this is important:

Actively sourcing and supporting diverse local vendors and suppliers directly contributes to the economic growth and sustainability of the Tampa Bay community. This not only helps these businesses thrive but also strengthens the local economy.

#### **Intended Impact:**

To provide attendees with an authentic experience of the community, allowing them to appreciate the diverse aspects of Tampa Bay.

#### **Success Metrics:**

To identify and contract diverse vendors, receive survey feedback from attendees and encourage members to adopt a similar vendor diversity approach through their own business events.

#### **Engage Diverse International and Local Media Outlets**

Underrepresented Populations Through guidance from Visit Tampa Bay (VTB), the Destinations International (DI) communications team reached out to local media outlets representing various identities to demonstrate how this event is creating an impact for their communities.

DI engaged with international, local multicultural and identity-specific media outlets, sharing stories that highlighted the positive economic impact of the Annual Convention. The aim was to reach diverse audiences within the community and raise awareness about the opportunities and impacts of the travel and tourism industry.

#### Why this is important:

By reaching out to media outlets representing various identities, DI ensures that the voices and perspectives of diverse communities are included in the narrative. This fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging, making the event more relevant and meaningful to a broader audience.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Engaging with a variety of media outlets, including international, local multicultural, and identity-specific channels, allows DI to reach a wider and more diverse audience. This helps to spread awareness of the event's positive impact on the local economy and the broader community.



#### **Arrange Identity-Specific Meetups**



Four identity specific meetups were successfully organized in Tampa. IGLTA hosted the inaugural LGBTQ+ meetup, and the first Cafecito, a morning meetup for Latino/a/x attendees also took place. Miles Partnership sponsored the annual Black Leaders Reception, and the 14th annual Smart Women Who Get S\*\*\* Done (SWWGSD) group had a successful turnout.

#### Why this is important:

Attendees eagerly anticipate coming together at the Annual Convention, and it's crucial for Destinations International to create environments where people can be themselves, connect, and network with others who share their identities.

#### **Intended Impact:**

To create a safe space for a multitude of identities to meet and connect.

#### **Success Metrics:**

50 attendees joined the LGBTQ+ meetup, 75 attendees joined the Black Leaders Reception, 30 attendees joined the Cafecito, and 300 attendees joined the SWWGSD meetup. An additional \$1,465 was raised for Dress for Success at the SWWGSD meetup.



"It opened my eyes up to how the tourism industry is much bigger than I thought it was. I never knew about DMOs and the number of organizations globally that contribute to this much success."

MYA MENDOZA, HBCU SCHOLAR
FROM MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

## Workforce Development and Diversification Initiative with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)



In 2022, Destinations International (DI) announced its HBCU Scholarship Program, an initiative launched championed by then-Association chair Al Hutchinson, President & CEO of Visit Baltimore. This program provides students enrolled in HBCU tourism management and hospitality programs with an opportunity to receive \$8,000 toward their tuition and full access to attend the Annual Convention. In its inaugural year, four recipients attended the 2023 Annual Convention; in 2024, seven recipients attended Annual Convention.

#### Why this is important:

Most people in the destination or meeting planning sectors had little knowledge about this aspect of the travel and tourism industry when beginning their careers. The Destinations International Foundation HBCU Scholarship program aims to provide students in historically underrepresented colleges with an opportunity to learn about the industry, connect with leaders, and to envision a career path that aligns with their interests.

#### **Intended Impact:**

The goal for our scholarship recipients was to explore the various opportunities within the travel industry, learn about key challenges the industry is facing, inspire these young leaders to envision themselves within this field and facilitate connections with industry leaders. Following the Annual Convention, these students will have opportunities throughout the academic year to connect and grow through mentorships, career readiness workshops and networking sessions. Ultimately, these efforts aim to drive workforce development and diversification.

#### **Success Metrics:**

Positive feedback from scholars: The HBCU scholars reported having meaningful and inspiring experiences, gaining exposure to the industry and feeling encouraged to envision their futures within the sector. All shared that they would highly recommend the scholarship program to others.

#### Youth Engagement Initiatives with Local Organizations



In April, Destinations International (DI), Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) and the NAACP met to discuss how the Annual Convention could benefit Hillsborough County students interested in exploring career paths in the tourism industry. Three high school students who competed in the national NAACP ACT-SO competition were identified by the Branch President.

Using this information, the DI team matched these students with staff expertise and various attendees with experience in relevant fields. A student with an interest in culinary arts shadowed the hotel's events and banquets team. A student with an interest in information technology met with several members of the DI team, with technology leaders and partners and attended a breakout session on innovative technologies for accessible travel. A student with interest in photography and communications shadowed Paradise, a DI agency partner, photographers and videographers onsite, and DI's own marketing team. This two-day opportunity provided students with practical insights into how their interests could evolve into viable careers within the industry.

Additionally, the VTB team sponsored one student from the county to attend the ACT-SO national competition. DI will be working with the NAACP to foster a long-term relationship, encouraging destinations with local NAACP chapters to sponsor students in the hospitality track into future ACT-SO competitions.

#### Why this is important:

The industry's talent pipeline needs to be strengthened; therefore, DI sought to build trust and form partnerships with grassroots organizations that advocate for underrepresented communities. By engaging with local groups that focus on youth education and career development, DI aimed to create opportunities that align with these goals.

#### **Intended Impact:**

A positive experience for students, staff and attendees alike, fostering knowledge sharing and opening doors for potential mentorship or internship opportunities. DI aims to replicate these efforts in future convention destinations.

#### **Success Metrics:**

Active student engagement, inspiration and interest in being a part of the travel industry.



#### **Session Programming**



Destination Stewardship Diversification and Development of Workforce Engagement with Underrepresented Population Welcoming and Belonging

Through engaging breakout sessions, Destinations International (DI) aimed to integrate, educate and create awareness on social inclusion related topics associated with diversification of the workforce, youth engagement, accessibility, global indigenous cultures and LGBTQ+ populations as it intersects with visitation and the future of the travel industry. The Annual Convention began with an opening general session, where Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) President & CEO Santiago Corrada welcomed attendees and authentically acknowledged the indigenous lands that Tampa Bay now considers home

#### Sessions included:

- Global Constituent Exchange with VTB
- Elevating Talent Retention
   Strategies for Emerging Leaders
- Navigating Political Challenges in LGBTQ+ Destination Marketing
- Redefining Success: Global Perspectives on Economic, Social and Environmental Impact
- A Flourishing Future: A Case Study in Developing a Regenerative Approach to Destination Management
- Embracing Accessible and Inclusive Tourism
- Destination Stewardship: Effectively Integrating Planning and Action
- Expanding Horizons: Embracing Social Inclusion While Maintaining EDI Values

- Idea to Impact: Leveraging Authenticity in Destination Development to Create Community Shared Value
- Moving Your Place Forward: Evolving Convention, Sports and Entertainment Venues in The World of Sustainable Tourism
- Navigating Workforce Development in Tourism: Balancing Long-Term Solutions with Immediate Needs
- Building Indigenous Tourism:
   Partnering for Global Success
- How to Showcase the Value of Tourism to Your Local Community
- No One is Just One Thing: How Intersectional Identities Are Shaping the Future of Destination Marketing
- InnovateAble @DI Shark Tank, curated by TravelAbility

#### Why this is important:

Inclusionary topics are vital for the industry and significantly affect the well-being and economy of our global member destinations.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Attendees were exposed to critical issues, opportunities and applied concepts.

#### **Success Metrics:**

Session attendance and positive feedback via word of mouth and surveys.

The Visit Tampa Bay Activation Hub, a replica of the J.C. Newman Cigar Factory



#### Inclusive spaces

The Visit Tampa Bay activation hub offered a stunning replica of the J.C. Newman Cigar Factory made entirely of recycled cardboard. J.C. Newman, America's oldest family-owned premium cigar maker, has been handcrafting cigars in Tampa since 1895, making it an iconic part of the city's rich history and culture. Attendees were invited to pick up a complimentary water bottle crafted from bio-based plastic derived from sugar cane.

Not pictured here, Destinations International (DI) also launched a sensory space which served as a tranquil environment for attendees to mentally disconnect and recharge by engaging in visual, audio, olfactory and tactile experiences. Speed Networking session brought together 30 Under 30 class, HBCU scholars, and industry leaders for engaging discussions.

#### **Local Thought Leaders**

DI engaged with the Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) team to identify local thought leaders who specialize in topics related to inclusion, workforce diversification, intellectual capital and accessibility.

#### Why this is important:

Featuring local thought leaders highlights the talent and knowledge within the host community, giving them a platform to share their expertise with a broader audience. Speakers bring a deep understanding of the region's unique challenges and opportunities, through infrastructure and economic, human and relational, or cultural and creative lenses. Their insights add authenticity and relevance to the discussions, making the content more meaningful for attendees. Further, featuring local speakers can reduce event costs.

#### **Intended Impact:**

epresentation and Engagement

To showcase insights and solutions from Tampa that attendees can learn from and implement in their own destinations.

#### **Success Metrics:**

Destinations International (DI) incorporated local thought leaders into the convention, including:

- Tampa Mayor Jane Castor shared her perspective on inclusion, community and the importance of collaboration.
- Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) President & CEO Santiago Corrada sat on the "Embracing Accessible and Inclusive Tourism" panel, the "From Local Minds to Global Meetings" panel and served as a judge for InnovateAble @ DI Shark Tank curated by TravelAbility.

Metrics must be defined for the host destination, their extended stakeholders and community, and emphasize where thought leadership gaps exist and how content can elevate the impact of the meeting itself. Metrics can be categorized by concepts addressed, such as economic, knowledge and innovation, media, destination development, social, environmental, cultural, brand awareness, or engagement. Once metrics are defined, tools can be introduced to measure success.

#### Small Business Membership Pilot Program



A supplier diversity pilot project launched at the Annual Convention aimed to lower barriers for underrepresented entrepreneurs engaged with the travel industry.

Small business grants would provide entrepreneurs with exposure to industry professionals and an opportunity to demonstrate their services to an audience seeking diverse vendors and talent.

The following grantees include:

- Rachel Covello with OutCoast provided DI with content that demonstrates how Tampa is a
  welcoming destination for LGBTQ+ populations from a local perspective. OutCoast supports
  LGBTQ-inclusive destinations, businesses and experiences in Florida through online blog
  channels, networking opportunities, content creation and consulting.
   She is based in St. Petersburg, Florida, near Tampa.
- Damon Butler with Triangle Blvd captured photographs of specific sessions, demonstrating his talent and expertise with photography and videography in the travel industry.

#### Why this is important:

The travel industry has the power to create, collaborate and give voice to underrepresented businesses.

#### **Intended Impact:**

To connect attendees with small, minority-owned businesses that offer services perfectly aligned with their needs.

#### **Success Metrics:**

Both small businesses reported a positive experience at the Annual Convention and made connections with potential prospects.

#### Damon Butler

CEO

### triangleblvd

"Our team attends quite a few conferences across various industries and the Destinations International Annual Convention did not disappoint. As a small business owner, it's easy to get lost in the crowd, but this conference felt like an experience. The attendees were engaged in the content, the sessions were productive and informative, and the after-hours activities were spectacular. I'm glad to have participated in the event and am looking forward to next year already!"



#### Rachel Covello

CEO

"I've been working with Visit Tampa Bay for a few years now. There are so many inclusive places in Florida and Tampa is on the top of that list. I'm really excited to be here for Destinations International."

#### **Community Impact Narrative Imagery**



Storytelling is a powerful tool. The Destinations International (DI) team wanted to provide context to the importance of the Tampa Case Study by capturing imagery of the efforts highlighted and videos from stakeholders involved in the process.

#### Why this is important:

Images and videos vividly tell the story of why Tampa was chosen for the Annual Convention and bring the narrative of inclusion to life.

#### **Intended Impact:**

The DI team aimed to capture relevant and valuable content to convey the Tampa Case Study, with the goal of crafting a video narrative that inspires destination members to be intentional in their inclusion efforts when hosting meetings and events

#### **Success Metrics:**

20 film interviews with DI and local stakeholders were captured in over 2 hours of event footage to facilitate adoption of this case study and the recreation of impactful strategies and initiatives at future events.

### POST-ANNUAL CONVENTION

The impacts of the Tampa Case Study went beyond the convention. The Destinations International (DI) team and partners gathered data, experiences were shared publicly and considerations are underway to embed activations into future events.

Part three highlights initiatives that have taken place after the Annual Convention to ensure impact.

#### **Assessing Impact Through Data**

In addition to word-of-mouth sharing about the experience of the impact activations at the Annual Convention, the DI team captured data on impact and attendee sentiments through the following ways:

- Collected feedback through a post event survey: Net Promoter Score (NPS) of +49 on a scale of -100 to +100. Scores between +30 and +70 are considered strong.
- Reviewed Annual Convention hashtag posts on social media: #DIAC24 was used in 81 Instagram posts and 333 LinkedIn posts.
- Contacted attendees who were a part of the impact experiences to get their feedback

- Gathered feedback from HBCU scholars and NAACP students
- Worked with Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) to collect information about the economic impact of the Sunset Market event
- Worked with Visit Tampa Bay to capture the economic impact of Annual Convention through DI's Event Impact Calculator (EIC)

#### Why this is important:

Collecting qualitative and quantitative data helps identify what was successful and what should be continued.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Data can demonstrate community impact, attendee experience, and emphasize accountability and transparency

#### **Success Metrics:**

The collection and review of qualitative and quantities data allowed DI to understand how the Annual Convention created an environment of welcoming and belonging, built trust and community vitality, and contributed to economic impact for Tampa Bay.

## **EVENT IMPACT**

## \$3.78M

Estimated direct economic impact for the Tampa Bay community

\$170,000

Estimated local investment generated for the Tampa Bay community (sales tax, occupancy tax, other local taxes)

1,800+

Estimated hospitality jobs directly supported by this event (lodging, food and beverage, transportation, facility management, audio/visual, retail, recreation, and security)

Source: Economic data provided by Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) utilizing the Destinations International (DI) Event Impact Calculator (EIC).

## ATTENDEE FEEDBACK

## +49

Net Promoter Score (NPS) From post-event feedback on a scale of -100 to +100 (Scores between +30 and +70 are considered strong)

#### Florian Herrmann

CEO Herrmann Global:

"Destinations International nurtures a global and diverse community of destination experts preparing them for a new era of travel and tourism. Can't wait to visit the next event."

#### **Grant Palmer**

CRO, Navigator:

"Destinations International is what an industry organization should be.
It centralizes the community, acts as an advocate for the relevant issues, leads important discussions, predicts future trends, educates the industry about the past, present and future, moderates valuable discussions, lobbies for our industry and leads the way in a warm and inclusive fashion. The annual convention is the centerpiece for us all to congregate and feel a part of the community."

#### On Inclusive Spaces

"It was amazing! With all the conversations and hustle it was an amazing place to escape to. I am big into meditation and the sensory space gave me a much needed space to relax."

"I appreciated that the sensory space was available. It was also comforting to know that there were others who may be feeling overwhelmed by the stimulus of the conference and that I was not the only one!"

#### **Sharing Stories That Highlight Impact**

Following Annual Convention the Destinations International (DI) team crafted stories to emphasize the importance of workforce development. Two articles, "Cultivating Our Future: Student Shadow Program Fuels Industry Interest" and "The Impact of the HBCU Scholarship Program," highlight the NAACP student shadow and the HBCU scholarship experience.

#### Why this is important:

Despite the Annual Convention's record attendance, showcasing impact through post-event stories is an essential way to celebrate inclusive experiences with the entire industry.

#### **Intended Impact:**

To bring awareness to two programs that invest in and enrich young leaders of diverse backgrounds.

#### **Success Metrics:**

On average, DI blogs have garnered 100-200 views. Together, these blogs have an average of 108 views.



HBCU Scholars are celebrated alongside industry leaders during the Recognition Celebration. Left to right: Don Welsh, Timothy Bush, Cassandre Bossicot, Celine Trombi, Christian Nettles, Hannah Weiss, Justin Simon, Kaniyah Williams Bailey, and Mya Mendoza

#### Media Follow Up

#### Why this is important:

The Destinations International (DI) Communications team continued to engage with media post-convention. Messages must be repeated consistently and constantly to break through in a crowded information landscape and reach intended audiences. In addition to reaching out to media prior to and during the convention, it was important to ensure that media had received all information, resolved any outstanding questions and were encouraged to provide coverage in their reporting. It was also a priority to keep media informed of future developments, including the release of the Case Study.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Media follow-up after the Annual Convention helped secure additional coverage and sustained interest in future information on the event and other aspects of social inclusion.

#### **Success Metrics:**

Ongoing engagement and interest: Several additional stories and social media posts occurred after the Annual Convention as the result of follow-up with media, including providing additional content (e.g. photos, information updates.)

#### **Narrative Compilation**

#### Why this is important:

DI's Marketing team engaged with partners to create a case study video. Video content is essential to tell the overarching case study story in an interactive and compelling way. A video summary allows for dynamic viewership across multiple channels including website, social media and email newsletters. Overall video production can additionally be segmented into shorter, bite-sized pieces to attract additional viewership with a shorter attention span and time commitment.

#### **Intended Impact:**

Creation of an engaging video telling the story of the case study in a five-minute runtime. The summary video will be shared on DI social media, website, email, and other digital channels. Additional short-form video content will be created to expand on the stories told in the summary video.

#### **Success Metrics:**

20 interviews were filmed on-site at Annual Convention amassing over seven hours of event footage. Additional metrics for reach and viewership will be examined post-production and upon release.



Destinations International is displayed during the Welcome Reception drone show.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the concerns voiced sentiments voiced upon announcing Tampa Bay in July 2023, Destinations International (DI) recognized the opportunity to consider a different path when preparing for its 2024 Annual Convention. The year-long vision, planning and partnership surrounding the event allowed DI, Visit Tampa Bay (VTB), members of the working group and the broader industry community to focus on their objective: hosting an inclusive event that would give back to the Tampa Bay community and showcase how welcoming the city is.

The Tampa Case Study sets a new benchmark for the future of inclusive business events. Destinations International encourages destination professionals and business event strategists to use this case study and the accompanying toolkit, which includes frameworks for developing impactful, legacy-driven meetings and events.

It is crucial for destination professionals to engage with government, board members and community stakeholders when defining the vision for an event. Establish a working group with a shared mission and explore key questions to gain a deeper understanding of the communities whose livelihoods depend on travel and tourism. These discussions should help identify impactful activations, collaborators and programming that can break down barriers. Seek opportunities to involve diverse suppliers and media and provide youth shadowing experiences to inspire future generations. Capture stories, insights and feedback to demonstrate the impact of the event. By taking these actions, your destination will be able to harness the power of events to drive positive change in the community.

## SPECIAL THANKS

We invite you to engage with the organizations who made this case study a success.

7th and Grove

Darcie Milfort

Destinations International Association Board

Destinations International Foundation Board

Dress for Success Tampa Bay

Feeding Tampa Bay

Legacy Collective

**Local Speakers** 

Madame Fortune

Mayor Jane Castor

NAACP Hillsborough Branch

On Point Events Group

OutCoast

Paradise Advertising & Marketing, Inc. — A Partner for Good

Rebuilding Together Tampa Bay

Soliman Productions

T. Couture

The International LGBTQ+ Travel Association

**Tourism Cares** 

Triangle Blvd.

Visit Tampa Bay

Thank you to all our partners involved in the Annual Convention

