

# ESSENTIAL RESOURCES FOR TODAY'S DESTINATION LEADERS

*Insights, tools and strategies to help you lead  
through change and deliver impact*

## DESTINATIONS AT A TURNING POINT

Destination organizations are navigating a rapidly evolving landscape — defined by shifting traveler expectations, community priorities and increasing pressure to demonstrate value.

At their core, destination organizations are not just promoters of place; they are **catalysts for community vitality**, helping communities grow, compete and thrive.

This perspective — outlined in the **Catalyst for Community Vitality Brief** — reframes the role of destination organizations as essential drivers of economic, social and community impact, providing a foundation for how the industry must evolve.

Today, that role is expanding in both scope and expectation.

Leaders are being called to balance economic impact with community well-being, environmental responsibility and long-term sustainability, while also clearly **demonstrating and advocating for the value of their organizations**.

Success is no longer measured by visitation alone, but by the value delivered to residents, stakeholders and the destination as a whole.

To support this shift, Destinations International has developed a suite of research, resources and tools designed to help destination leaders navigate change and lead with confidence.

## UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S CHANGING

The **2025 DestinationNEXT Futures Study** highlights the forces reshaping the global visitor economy, from funding pressures and workforce challenges to evolving expectations around stewardship and community alignment.

These changes are not theoretical. They are actively redefining:

- How destinations compete
- How organizations are funded
- And how success is measured

Paired with the **Advocacy & Action Roadmap**, these insights help destination leaders move from awareness to action — equipping them to clearly articulate their value, align stakeholders and advocate for sustained investment.

Because in today's environment, **advocacy is no longer optional — it is essential**.

## BUILDING TRUST IN A COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT

Reputation has become one of the most critical drivers of destination success.

The **Destination Reputation Study** shows that traveler decisions are influenced not only by experiences, but by broader concerns — such as safety, weather, social dynamics and media narratives.

Travelers want to be inspired but they also expect transparency, context and credibility when concerns arise.

For destination organizations, this means taking a more active role in shaping perception, building trust and communicating with authenticity.

## DESIGNING DESTINATIONS FOR EVERYONE

As expectations evolve, destination organizations are being called to create experiences that are not only compelling, but accessible and welcoming by design.

The **Accessibility Playbook** provides a practical, action-oriented framework to help destinations improve accessibility across the entire visitor journey — from planning and communication to on-the-ground experiences.

Accessibility is not one-size-fits-all. It requires intentional design, continuous learning and a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of travelers.

By embedding accessibility into strategy and operations, destinations can:

- Expand their reach to underserved and growing audiences
- Enhance the overall visitor experience for all
- Strengthen alignment with community values and expectations

This is not just about compliance — it is about **creating destinations where more people can fully participate and feel welcome.**

## DELIVERING MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT

Turning strategy into action is where real impact happens.

The ***Food Recovery and Redistribution Guide*** provides a tangible example of how destination organizations can turn strategy into measurable, real-world impact — reducing waste, supporting local communities and aligning with stakeholder priorities.

It reinforces a broader shift:

- From short-term outputs to long-term outcomes
- From hosting events to creating lasting community benefit
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Even small, intentional actions can drive meaningful impact at scale.

## STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATION: WORKFORCE & LEADERSHIP

Behind every successful destination is a strong, capable workforce.

The ***Workforce Development Brief*** underscores the challenges organizations face in attracting, developing and retaining talent in a rapidly changing environment. As roles expand and expectations grow, investing in people is foundational.

A resilient, future-ready workforce is essential to:

- Executing strategy
- Delivering impact
- Sustaining long-term success

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DESTINATION LEADERS

To succeed in today's environment, destination organizations must:

- **Adapt to change** with clarity and confidence
- **Demonstrate and advocate for their value** to stakeholders and communities
- **Build trust** through transparency and authentic storytelling
- **Design welcoming, accessible and community-aligned experiences**
- **Deliver measurable impact** that benefits residents and the destination
- **Invest in people** to strengthen organizational resilience

The opportunity ahead is not just to respond to change, but to lead through it.

# BEYOND THE REPORTS: TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

Research and insight is only valuable if it leads to action.

That's where Destinations International goes further — equipping destination organizations not just with insight, but with the **tools, community and professional development needed to lead with confidence.**

## INDUSTRY-LEADING TOOLS THAT PROVE IMPACT

DI's destination tools help organizations move from data to decision-making — enabling leaders to:

- Measure and communicate their value
- Demonstrate economic and community impact
- Turn insights into actionable strategy

These are practical, proven solutions used by destinations around the world to strengthen credibility and drive results.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THAT BUILDS LEADERS

As the industry evolves, so must the leaders within it.

DI's professional development opportunities are designed to support destination professionals **at every stage of their career** — from emerging leaders to seasoned executives.

Through certificate programs, industry credentials like CDME and ongoing learning opportunities, DI helps individuals:

- Build the skills needed to navigate a changing industry
- Grow into more strategic, confident leaders
- Strengthen both personal and organizational impact

Because developing talent at every level and investing in talent is essential to building stronger destinations.

# A GLOBAL COMMUNITY THAT MOVES THE INDUSTRY FORWARD

Now more than ever, this industry needs to come together.

As the world's largest association for destination organizations, DI connects a global network of leaders who are:

- Sharing knowledge and best practices
- Solving challenges collaboratively
- Shaping the future of the visitor economy

This collective strength helps destinations — and their communities — thrive.

## ONE ORGANIZATION. COMPLETE SUPPORT.

From research and advocacy to tools, education and community, Destinations International provides everything destination leaders need to navigate change and lead with impact.

**Because when destinations are empowered, communities thrive.**

Join the global community helping shape the future of destinations – and start leading what's next.

