



BUILDING TOURISM TALENT PIPELINES: DESTINATION & INDUSTRY EXAMPLES

Developed by the Destinations International 30 Under 30 Alumni Council



EVERY DESTINATION APPROACHES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIFFERENTLY.

This collection is intended to provide inspiration, practical examples and real-world approaches to help destination and industry organizations attract, engage and retain tourism talent.

*Interested to showcase your organization's approach to workforce development?
Contact impact@destinationsinternational.org.*

- Small Destinations (Annual Operating Budget of \$3M USD or Less).
- Medium Destinations (Annual Operating Budget between \$3M-\$10M USD).
- Large Destinations (Annual Operating Budget above \$10M USD).
- Industry Examples

SMALL DESTINATIONS

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET OF \$3M USD OR LESS

DISCOVER KLAMATH VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU



Designing internships around student aspirations and destination needs creates meaningful, mutually beneficial workforce pathways.



Destination Challenge

How can we expand workforce relationships beyond healthcare sector into hospitality and tourism?

How can we navigate federal funding cuts affecting local National Park Service sites?



Program Overview

Partnership with Klamath Union High School to pilot an internship program and integrate students into tourism-related, real-world projects.



Approach

- Internship designed around videography capstone project.
- Larger student competition for visitor merchandise design.
- Exposure to destination projects and stakeholder meetings.



Program Impact

- Student exposure to real-world tourism strategy and collaboration.
- Strengthened relationship with the school district.

Contact: Millie Osguthorpe, Executive Director. millie@discoverklamath.com



GILMER COUNTY CHAMBER (PICK ELLIJAY)



Early exposure, real experience, and sustained relationships help retain young talent in rural communities.



Destination Challenge

How can we limit the realities of rural "brain drain" that impact young talent in our community?



Program Overview

Engagement with LEAD Gilmer and work-based learning programs connects students to tourism careers.



Approach

- All students receive ongoing mentorship.
- Students receive credit for leadership and industry immersion program involvement, including site visits.
- Interns receive credit and payment; Scholarship if they meet attendance requirements.



Program Impact

- Increased awareness of local industry opportunities: 3 recent college graduates worked for Pick Ellijay while getting their degrees and have continued post-grad.
- Retention and long-term employment: 2021 intern now runs social media at Pick Ellijay.

Contact: Caitlin Neal, Marketing Director. caitlinn@gilmerchamber.com



MEDIUM DESTINATIONS

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET BETWEEN \$3M-\$10M USD

ARLINGTON CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

A structured, data-informed ecosystem enables scalable and trackable workforce pipeline development.



Destination Challenge

How can we build a large-scale, data-informed workforce pipeline to align with our tourism and sports industries?



Program Overview

Travel & Sports Legacy Foundation (TSLF) delivers structured workforce development programming, internships, and scholarships across education systems.

www.travelandsportslegacyfoundation.org



Approach

- Programs reach over 1,500 students annually across organizations.
- Biennial workforce studies, employer/stakeholder engagement, advisory committees.
- Soft skills training, paid internships, scholarships, year-round events, teacher education.



Program Impact

- Students are tracked after program completion to measure entry into the industry.
- Sustained scholarship growth: In 2026, TSLF awarded \$3,750 to five students in spring and will award up to \$4,500 to six students in fall.

Contact: Mary German, Chief Operating Officer & Veronica Palacios, Executive Assistant
mary@arlington.org, veronica@arlington.org

Internal talent growth and external pipeline-building should be treated as interconnected strategies.



Destination Challenge

How can we create growth opportunities internally while strengthening the external tourism talent pipeline?



Program Overview

Internal workforce development strategies are combined with external industry pipeline initiatives.



Approach

- **INTERNAL:** Acting assignments provide temporary leadership experience and skill building. Access to conferences, trainings, and travel. Internal-first hiring practices.
- **EXTERNAL:** Partnerships with Manitoba Tourism Education Council. Industry training workshops. Collaboration on centralized tourism job board. Public-facing campaigns.



Program Impact

- Increased access to leadership and skill development.
- Expanded visibility of tourism careers.

VISIT COLORADO SPRINGS

A strong internship strategy can transform into a beloved annual program.



Destination Challenge

How can we strengthen our presence among students in the local community and educate them on the career opportunities that exist in tourism and hospitality?



Program Overview

- Initial discovery meetings with local colleges, university career centers, and discussions with destination leadership.
- Tourism Business Intern program offers 8-week (minimum) summer internship.
- www.visitcos.com/about-us/employment-volunteers.



Approach

- Rotates through all departments.
- One main summer-long project to complete.
- Attends DI Annual Convention.
- Includes goal-setting and weekly 1:1s.
- Builds core competencies including experience in professional development, communication, critical thinking, equity & inclusion, leadership, teamwork and tech.



Program Impact

- Strengthens relationships with local colleges/universities.
- Makes an early impact on emerging talent.
- Advocates for careers in the tourism industry.
- Presents a positive destination voice in the community.
- Improves organization's cross-departmental communication and collaboration.

Contact: Alexea Veneracion, Director of Communications. alexea@visitcos.com



LARGE DESTINATIONS

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET ABOVE \$10M USD

VISIT RENO TAHOE



Combining internships with university partnerships expands access and builds early awareness of tourism careers across a broader student audience.



Destination Challenge

How can we create early-career entry points that build awareness of tourism careers and provide hands-on experience for local students?



Program Overview

Partnership with a local university to offer recurring internship opportunities across fall, spring, and summer semesters, alongside class presentations from the executive leadership team.



Approach

- 1-2 interns per term, typically business or journalism majors.
- Support all members of marketing/communications department through hands-on project work.
- Participate in internal and agency meetings.
- Required to complete a marketing-related, online certification course.



Program Impact

- Students develop awareness of career pathways within the tourism industry.
- Students gain practical, hands-on experience in destination marketing and communication.
- Students gain exposure to both day-to-day functions and leadership perspectives.

Contact: Celeste Rodriguez, Digital Communications Specialist. crodriguez@visitrenotahoe.com



VISIT GREATER PALM SPRINGS



Connecting students, educators, industry leaders and workforce partners through a shared talent development strategy creates sustainable pathways into tourism careers.



Destination Challenge

- Connect the workforce and youth to industry and career growth opportunities within the tourism and hospitality industry.
- Increase training, networking opportunities and leadership development resources.



Program Overview

The TEAM GPS Foundation is dedicated to developing a highly skilled and engaged workforce through industry partnerships and pathways to successful careers, contributing to shared success across the Coachella Valley.



Approach

- **K-12 Programs:** Hospitality days with high school sophomores, Passport to Leadership summer program with rising seniors.
- **College Programs:** Various scholarships, industry conference attendance, paid internships.
- **Workforce:** Leadership training institute, Ambassador Network, Committee focused on addressing workforce needs.



Program Impact

- \$203K+ in college scholarships awarded
- \$53K+ in travel scholarships awarded
- 600+ high school students reached
- 324+ Leadership Institute graduates
- 1,300+ GPS Ambassadors trained

Contact: Lauren Bruggemans, Sr. Dir. of Destination Stewardship & Exec. Dir. TEAM GPS Foundation,
laurenb@visitgreaterps.com



Building sustained partnerships across education, community organizations, and industry creates stronger pathways for students to explore and pursue careers in tourism and hospitality.



Destination Challenge

- Limited awareness of industry opportunities among students and emerging professionals.
- Need for stronger workforce pipelines connecting education, career readiness, and industry exposure.
- Expanding access to mentorship, professional development, and real-world opportunities within the Phoenix community.



Program Overview

- Career awareness programming on hospitality, tourism, dest. management, and economic impact.
- Professional development workshops including resume building, interviewing skills, networking, and career readiness.
- Workforce development partnerships with ElevateEd, local high schools, Boys & Girls Clubs, Arizona State University and Grand Canyon University.



Approach

- Positions as turning a passion for community and travel into a career.
- Dedicated landing page for DMO opportunities, including interview prep materials.
- Programming with Boys & Girls Clubs include career assessments, interviewing and resume prep, and industry exposure.



Program Impact

- Increased awareness of industry career opportunities among students and emerging professionals.
- Expanded workforce development partnerships and career-readiness resources across community.
- Strengthened the future talent pipeline while reinforcing Visit Phoenix's commitment to education, community investment, and economic development.

INDUSTRY EXAMPLES

ACROSS THE DI PARTNER COMMUNITY

GUEST LECTURING:

- Carleigh Dworetzky, Director of Destination Insights at Granicus, presents at Virginia Tech University to educate students on the destination sector, the importance of industry data, and recommendations for data-driven storytelling. Contact: carleigh.dworetzky@granicus.com



*Are you an industry partner who engages in external workforce development efforts?
We'd love to hear from you! Contact impact@destinationsinternational.org.*

