LETTER FROM THE
PRESIDENT & CEO

It is with much excitement to share Destinations International’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy roadmap for the travel and tourism industry.

We firmly stand by our belief that the travel and tourism industry should be open to everyone for opportunities and growth and that it is critical for destination organizations to commit to implementing an EDI strategy to drive a vision for change within their communities.

In 2017, with the support of our board of directors, Destinations International made the decision to prioritize this work, elevating EDI as a strategic goal for our organization. From that point forward, and through the support and leadership of EDI committee co-chairs—Kellie Henderson of SearchWide Global, Al Hutchinson of Visit Baltimore and John Percy of Destination Niagara USA—and the entire EDI Committee, the strategic roadmap that follows will help to advocate and recognize that our industry must be a leader in cultivating an environment where everyone is welcome, where there is equitable access for all, and where everyone’s voice and perspective can be heard. Here are just a few milestones that have helped build a foundation for our work:

- July 2018: Hosted our first Diversity & Inclusion meeting during our Annual Convention in Anaheim, CA.
- August 2018: Announced a member-wide call for committee participation to form our first Diversity & Inclusion Task Force.
- December 2018: In partnership with Association Forum, hosted a dialogue with key industry leaders from the association and CVB communities to brainstorm potential strategies to cultivate a welcoming environment for meeting and event attendees.
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO CONTINUED...

- February 2019: Launched a study to collect a snapshot of racial and workforce diversity examining demographics of board leadership, executive, staff and some general policies.

- March 2019: In collaboration with the Philadelphia CVB/PHL Diversity, convened a Meetings & Conventions Leaders Roundtable designed to guide industry leaders through the process of developing a common language and vision for diversity and inclusion within the Meetings and Convention industries.

Over the course of 2019 and into 2020, our work continued by implementing educational opportunities across signature events including our Annual Convention and discipline-focused summits. Additionally, we have worked to cultivate new industry partnerships with the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality and the National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners. Most recently in November 2020, we released our first EDI Study on Destination Organizations examining overall demographics and perceptions on EDI within our member destination organizations.

In 2021, Destinations International is committed to implement Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategies and best practices and promise to work with our members and industry leaders to be the catalyst for change. There is much work to be done and we must all come together to advance these sometimes difficult, but important, conversations to drive solutions.

We look forward to working collaboratively across the travel and tourism community to implement this plan and hope you will join us.

Sincerely,

Don Welsh
President and CEO
Destinations International
THE BUSINESS CASE FOR
EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

McKinsey & Company researched the financial impact of diversity of companies across industries. Their May 2020 report, Diversity Wins, reviewed 1,000+ companies in 15 countries globally. They found that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 36% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians and 25% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians for gender diversity. In contrast, their report also revealed the negative impact to companies in the bottom quartile for both gender and ethnic and cultural diversity as being 29% less likely to achieve above-average profitability than were all other companies in their data set. “Companies in the top quartile for both gender and ethnic diversity are 12% more likely to outperform all other companies in the data set,” according to the 2020 Diversity Wins report by McKinsey & Company.

In addition, there have been countless published research studies from academia, corporations and other organizations that further support that diverse and inclusive teams tend to be more creative and innovative than homologous teams by bringing different experiences, perspectives and approaches to solving day-to-day business challenges. Diverse teams are also better equipped to target and serve diverse customer markets, such as women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ communities who currently represent an increasing share of consumer purchase power that is often overlooked or not leveraged by many organizations.

Also, according to the McKinsey & Company Report, the business case for diversity suggests that diversity beyond gender and racial ethnicity, as well diversity of experience, are also likely to bring some level of competitive advantage for organizations that are able to attract and retain diverse talent.

In the strategy roadmap that follows, Destinations International will highlight the opportunities and importance of why initiating Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) best practices will be critical for the recovery and growth of our industry.
ESTABLISHING A BENCHMARK

With any strategy, it is critical to begin with research. To develop and advance strategies to achieve our vision, we needed to gather baseline data from our members to establish a starting point on behalf of the destination marketing and management industry. In 2019, Destinations International launched its first study to benchmark the diversity of our destination member organizations by examining demographics of board and executive leadership, as well as some general policies. In August 2020, we looked to further document and collect baseline data by directly surveying individuals across the Destinations International membership to help establish a snapshot of our workforce by examining overall demographics and perceptions on EDI within their destination organizations. The report outlines baseline results, collected from 718 respondents.

Our findings identified the need and desire for destination organizations to take full advantage of the opportunity to drive growth in diverse leadership representation at the executive and board levels, the need to be deliberate in cultivating a diverse and inclusive talent pipeline and understanding the business case for diversity to drive innovative thought and financial opportunity to help our destination organizations prosper and maintain relevancy.

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy roadmap that follows, was designed based on the following opportunities suggested in this report:

- **Establish an actionable leadership pledge for the industry** to solidify the commitment to implement EDI best practices to strengthen leadership accountability and advance opportunities for diverse talent into executive, management and board roles.

- **Develop and offer opportunities for deeper learning** on self-awareness training and EDI educational programming.

- **Set industry best practices and standards** to help develop and cultivate diverse candidates for leadership roles within destination organizations by providing access to resources and career-advancing opportunities.

- **Continue to identify, benchmark and track metrics** to annually measure progress and growth within destination organizations to establish industry standards and promote accountability for EDI best practices and initiatives.

- **Develop and launch an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit** to support and provide Destinations International members with the resources and guidance to implement EDI strategies within their respective destinations.

Findings of the full report can be found [here](#).
EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AT DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL

MISSION STATEMENT
Destinations International recognizes and advocates the importance of cultivating a unified travel and tourism community where everyone is welcome, there is equitable access for all, and where existing power structures can be reshaped so that systemically marginalized voices and perspectives can are consistently heard and valued.

We are committed to transforming destination communities through thought leadership, best practices and tools based on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion principles through an anti-racist lens that empowers our members, so their destinations are true reflections of their communities.

GOAL
Through meaningful ongoing and long-term collaboration, Destinations International will lead and engage strategic planning and programmatic development initiatives and opportunities to enable structural social change for the benefit of our members’ communities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
• Develop and implement an ongoing public facing advocacy and communications strategy to drive awareness on the role and value of destination organizations and the broader tourism industry targeting diverse audiences.

• Identify, benchmark and track metrics to measure progress and growth within destination organizations to establish industry standards and promote accountability for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion best practices and initiatives.

• Develop and implement strategies to cultivate, foster and leverage critical partnerships to further Destinations International’s EDI strategic roadmap.

• Develop resources and best practices for destination organizations to implement EDI principles within their respective destination communities.

• Develop and implement EDI principles across Destinations International’s day-to-day operations and strategies to lead by example and reflect universal EDI best practices and standards.
EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRIORITIES

We firmly stand by our belief that all industries should be open to everyone for opportunities and growth and that it is critical for industry CEOs and executive leaders to commit to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to drive a vision for change and be accountable for implementing that change. A diverse and inclusive workplace is central to our industry’s ability to attract, develop and retain the talent it needs to remain competitive, drive innovation and maintain relevancy. We stand committed to our vision to implement Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategies and best practices and promise to work with our members and industry leaders to be the catalyst for change. There is much work to be done and we must all come together to advance these dialogues to drive solutions. Our 2021 EDI Strategy Roadmap will be driven by the following priorities:

Self-Awareness & Personal Investment

Industry professionals must acknowledge their role as fundamental changemakers in defining success for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and commit to doing the work first before asking the same of others. Destinations International will work to facilitate peer-to-peer engagement to have these tough, but critical, conversations to drive leadership commitment, board diversity and executive mentorship.

Education & Awareness

We are part of a highly collaborative and engaged community that leverages the benefits of cooperative learning and shared growth. Destinations International is committed to having open, honest conversations by sharing knowledge to build EDI best practices and collecting metrics to measure action and progress.
Community Engagement
Destination organizations must be deeply connected to the communities that make up their destinations and be committed to nurturing broader cultural and institutional change. Destinations International will work to support best practices and thought leadership to help drive equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives in communities to demonstrate how our industry can enrich the lives of those living in our destinations.

Workforce Development
We recognize how critical inclusivity is to foster innovation and bring together a wide variety of voices when promoting tourism and sustaining our economies. Destinations International will work to encourage industry executive leadership and boards to grow an inclusive and equitable workforce that reflects the level of diversity we wish to welcome to our destinations.

Branding & Promotion
We firmly believe in the transformative power of travel and are dedicated to including those the industry has historically ignored. Destinations International will work to establish industry standards to push towards inclusive and equitable marketing practices that are essential to tourism marketing and destination brand stewardship.
EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY OVERVIEW

The following organization chart provides a high-level view of our approach to implement an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy roadmap at Destinations International.
CORE PRIORITY:

SELF AWARENESS & PERSONAL INVESTMENT

Industry professionals must acknowledge their role as fundamental changemakers in defining success for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and commit to doing the work first before asking the same of others. Destinations International will work to facilitate peer-to-peer engagement to have these tough, but critical, conversations to drive leadership commitment, board diversity and executive mentorship.

CORE INITIATIVE: CEO ENGAGEMENT

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

CEO Pledge: Drive industry CEO and executive leadership commitment and engagement to support a pledge to implement EDI best practices and initiatives within destination communities. Board Diversity: Develop and launch board diversity initiatives to implement EDI standards and best practices on board composition, governance and policies within destination communities. Executive Mentorship: Recruit CEO mentors to support the future talent development of diverse CEO candidates through an executive leadership program.

BEST PRACTICES & CASE STUDIES

Source, collect and share case studies and data to serve as a resource for destination organizations.

TOOLS

CEO Toolkit: Develop and launch an EDI Toolkit to support and provide CEOs and executive leaders with resources and guidance to implement EDI strategies within their respective destinations. Executive EDI Masterclass: Live masterclass series to include topics such as emotional intelligence, effective communication, microaggressions and unconscious bias to build relevant skills for CEOs and executive leaders. Board Diversity Best Practices Guide: Resource guide for destination organization board diversity development (Released July 2020). Download here.

OUTCOMES

Increase of diverse leaders across CVB industry, specifically C-Suite level and board participation. Number of industry leaders committed to CEO Pledge. Executive Mentorship adoption and skill application.
**CORE PRIORITY: EDUCATION & AWARENESS**

We are part of a highly collaborative and engaged community that leverages the benefits of cooperative learning and shared growth. Destinations International is committed to having open, honest conversations by sharing knowledge to build EDI best practices and collecting metrics to measure action and progress.

### CORE INITIATIVE: RESEARCH

#### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

**Track Metrics:** Build on 2020 benchmark study to measure progress and growth within destination organizations to establish EDI industry standards and promote accountability.

**Professional Development & Destination Tools:** Implement EDI education and resources to address benchmark findings across existing Destinations International offerings and products: PDM, CDME, DMAP, DNEXT, EIC, Research platforms.

**Business Intelligence:** Leverage industry resources to identify the needs, behaviors and sentiment of underrepresented travel communities.

#### BEST PRACTICES & CASE STUDIES

Source, collect and share case studies and data to serve as a resource for destination organizations.

#### TOOLS

**Destinations International Research Platforms:** Maintain EDI question set requirement for Compensation & Benefits and Destination Organization Performance Reporting platforms.

**Annual Performance Report Card:** Develop and distribute annual performance report card on destination organization EDI standards and practices.

**EDI Benchmark Study on Destination Organizations:** Annually release EDI benchmark study on CVBs to track workforce diversity and measure EDI organizational sentiment.

**Online/Digital Resources:** Develop and maintain online EDI resources for DI members and partners (website, online community, documents, etc.)

#### OUTCOMES

- Measurable EDI industry standards to track gaps or success.
- Distribution of annual EDI report card on destination organizations.
- Shared industry data resources.
**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Destination organizations must be deeply connected to the communities that make up their destinations and be committed to nurturing broader cultural and institutional change. Destinations International will work to support best practices and thought leadership to help drive equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives in communities to demonstrate how our industry can enrich the lives of those living in our destinations.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CORE INITIATIVE: UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS</th>
<th>CORE INITIATIVE: INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>THOUGHT LEADERSHIP</strong></td>
<td><strong>THOUGHT LEADERSHIP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leverage University Partnerships: Develop and implement strategies to cultivate, foster and leverage critical university partnerships.</td>
<td>Leverage Industry Partnerships: Develop and implement strategies to cultivate, foster and leverage critical industry partnerships to help grow EDI awareness and adoption.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish Targeted Partnerships: University student associations, HBCUs, HSIs and university hospitality programs.</td>
<td>Establish Targeted Partnerships: Local and regional chambers of commerce, industry associations, NGOs and corporate travel brands.</td>
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<td><strong>BEST PRACTICES &amp; CASE STUDIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>BEST PRACTICES &amp; CASE STUDIES</strong></td>
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<td>Source, collect and share case studies and data to serve as a resource for destination organizations.</td>
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<td><strong>TOOLS</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOOLS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry PSA: Develop awareness campaign, targeting diverse student audiences (Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic-Serving Institutions) on career path opportunities within the broader hospitality industry.</td>
<td>Industry Resources: Identify and contribute resources and best practices for CEO toolkit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Student Outreach: Participation or sponsorship of events or programs to drive awareness of opportunities within the travel and tourism community.</td>
<td>Association Forum Partnership: Implement Welcoming Environment partnership with Association Forum®.</td>
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<td>U.S. Conference of Mayors: Execute partnership and advocacy strategy leveraging EDI priorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OUTCOMES</strong></td>
<td><strong>OUTCOMES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Formalized university partnerships to advance EDI strategies.</td>
<td>Formalized industry partnerships to advance EDI strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased awareness of opportunities within travel and tourism community.</td>
<td>Successful execution of industry partnerships.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
We recognize how critical inclusivity is to foster innovation and bring together a wide variety of voices when promoting tourism and sustaining our economies. Destinations International will work to encourage industry executive leadership and boards to grow an inclusive and equitable workforce that reflects the level of diversity we wish to welcome to our destinations.

### CORE INITIATIVE: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

#### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drive Industry Awareness:</th>
<th>Position the role and value of the travel and tourism community as a viable source for opportunities and career development for diverse communities.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplier Diversity/Procurement:</td>
<td>Establish standards to implement equitable practices to support diverse businesses and attractions to help further sustain local and regional economies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring and Recruitment Practices:</td>
<td>Develop and recommend structures for growth and leadership development at destination organizations focused on CVB hiring and recruitment practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivate Young and Mid-Career Leaders:</td>
<td>Cultivate creativity and innovation in young talent to drive voice and inclusive work environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Equity Policies:</td>
<td>Develop and adopt measurable equity policies and goals related to workforce development to support talent development and retention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow Diverse and Equitable Workforce:</td>
<td>Advocate for the strategic development of local workforce development plans through collaboration with local government, NGOs, corporate and economic development organizations.</td>
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#### BEST PRACTICES & CASE STUDIES

Source, collect and share case studies and data to serve as a resource for destination organizations.

#### TOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>30 Under 30 Program:</th>
<th>Provide professional development opportunities to future leaders within the travel and tourism industry to increase retention of young professionals.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship Program:</td>
<td>Provide hands-on professional work experience to expand the hospitality and tourism workforce by attracting underrepresented and ethnically diverse college graduates to career opportunities within the industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier Diversity Industry Resource:</td>
<td>Launch online industry resource.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Leadership Program:</td>
<td>Develop executive leadership program to help advance and grow future CEO talent pool specifically targeting underrepresented communities.</td>
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</table>

#### OUTCOMES

- Talent acquisition, recruitment and development standards.
- Increase of diverse candidates and hires at destination organizations.
- Increase in frequency of supplier diversity programs at destination organizations.
- Leadership skill development.
CORE PRIORITY: BRANDING & PROMOTION

We firmly believe in the transformative power of travel and are dedicated to including those the industry has historically ignored. Destinations International will work to establish industry standards to push towards inclusive and equitable marketing practices that are essential to tourism marketing and destination brand stewardship.

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<tr>
<th>CORE INITIATIVE: BRANDING &amp; STORYTELLING</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>THOUGHT LEADERSHIP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand Stewardship &amp; Accountability:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop diverse and inclusive best</td>
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<td>practices for destination organizations</td>
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<td>to be brand stewards to ultimately</td>
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<td>cultivate current and future residents,</td>
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<td>businesses and visitors.</td>
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<td>Destination Promotion: Evolve destination</td>
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<td>promotion practices to be welcoming</td>
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<td>and hospitable to all audiences to</td>
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<tr>
<td>remain competitive and relevant.</td>
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<td>Inclusive Marketing Practices: Push for</td>
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<tr>
<td>inclusive and equitable marketing</td>
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<tr>
<td>practices that prioritize community</td>
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<td>partnerships, contributions and</td>
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<td>authentic experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curate Authentic Experiences: Develop</td>
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<tr>
<td>best practices for destination</td>
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<tr>
<td>organizations to authentically share</td>
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<tr>
<td>experiences of their destination’s</td>
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<td>history, character and culture.</td>
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| BEST PRACTICES & CASE STUDIES              |
| Source, collect and share case studies and data to serve as a resource for destination organizations. |

| TOOLS                                    |
| Welcoming Environment Certificate:       |
| Course for destination organizations to  |
| learn and implement inclusive and        |
| welcoming best practices.                |
| Inclusive Marketing Practices Toolkit:   |
| Develop and launch toolkit to support    |
| and provide members with resources on    |
| equitable marketing practices for        |
| destinations.                            |
| Drive Conversations: Lead and initiate   |
| dialogue and education to help          |
| destination organizations cultivate a    |
| brand that is both diverse and inclusive.|

| OUTCOMES |
| Increased EDI destination branding and   |
| promotion practices and adoption.        |
| Number of certifications and toolkit     |
| downloads.                              |
2020

EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Destinations International’s Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee supports the strategic planning and programmatic initiatives and opportunities focused on 5 sub-committees: CEO Engagement, Industry Partnerships, University Partnerships, Research and Workforce Development. We would like to thank and acknowledge the below members for their volunteer time and commitment to contribute to the development of our 2021 EDI strategy roadmap.

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:
• Kellie Henderson, SearchWide Global
• Al Hutchinson, Visit Baltimore
• John Percy, Destination Niagara USA

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:
• Karin Aaron (CEO Engagement Co-Chair)
• Cleo Battle, Louisville Tourism (Workforce Development Co-Chair)
• Bennish Brown, Augusta Convention & Visitors Bureau
• Martesha Brown, Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
• David Burgess, Miles Partnership
• J. Auvis Cole
• Chris Collinson, Connect
• Terence Concannon, Lake Havasu City Convention & Visitors Bureau
• Gregory DeShields, Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau/PHL Diversity (University Partnerships Co-Chair)
• Lorne Edwards, Visit Phoenix
• Christina Erny, Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority
• Amir Eylon, Longwoods International
• Elliott Ferguson, Destination DC
• Jennifer Foster, STR, Inc.
• Cara Frank, Simpleview (Industry Partnerships Co-Chair)
• Danny Guerrero, MMGY
• Gretchen Hall, CDME, CMP, Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau
• Monique Holmes, Tourism Toronto
• Leonard Hoops, Visit Indy
• Charles Jeffers, Visit Baltimore
• James Jessie, Travel Portland (Industry Partnerships Co-Chair)
• Miranda Ji, CMP, Victoria Conference Centre & Business Events Victoria
• Cambria Jones, Visit Southlake (City of Southlake, Texas)
• Dzidra Junior, MGM Resorts International
• Nicole King-Smith, Lee County Visitor Convention Bureau
• Connie Kinnard, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (Research Chair)
• David Kliman, The Kliman Group, Inc
• Alex Krosney, Travel Manitoba
• Devin Lewis, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority
• Isaiah Little, Greater Newark Convention & Visitors Bureau
• Monya Mandich, Expedia Group
• Nan Marchand Beauvois, U.S. Travel Association
• Michelle Mason, Association Forum
• Angela Nelson, Experience Grand Rapids (University Partnerships Co-Chair)
• Brenda Newbern, VisitCape-Cape Girardeau Convention & Visitors Bureau
• Wendy Olson Killion, Expedia Group
• Jason Outman, Explore Branson
• Lauran Peoples, CGMP, Richmond Region Tourism
• Marci Ross, Maryland Office of Tourism
• Dasha Runyan, Richmond Region Tourism
• Andrew Said, Tourism Toronto
• Bruno Schwartz, Destination DC
• Milton Segarra, Coastal Mississippi (CEO Engagement Co-Chair)
• Neetu Singhal, Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau
• Butch Spyridon, Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.
• Jessica Strasser, Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau
• Marie Sueing, Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.
• John Tanzella, IGLTA
• Rickey Thigpen, Visit Jackson (Mississippi)
• Roberta Tisdul, Visit Indy
• Crystal Walker, Dayton Convention and Visitors Bureau
• Najauna White, Discover Durham (Workforce Development Co-Chair)
• Dan Williams, Experience Columbus
• Sabrina Wilson, Miles Partnership