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## **National International Readiness Training Program Prepares U.S. Destinations to Welcome the World**

Initiative, developed with industry partners and supported by federal leadership, equips destinations and tourism businesses for unprecedented global visitation

**March 26, 2026** — The International Inbound Travel Association (IITA) recently launched an **International Readiness Training Program**, a national initiative designed to prepare U.S. destinations, tourism suppliers, and local businesses to effectively welcome and serve international visitors in advance of a series of global events beginning in 2026.

Developed in collaboration with **Destinations International (DI)**, **Alon Tourism Solutions**, and the **U.S. National Travel & Tourism Office** and informed by engagement with the **White House Task Force on the FIFA World Cup**, the program provides practical, actionable training to help communities across the country prepare for the anticipated surge in international visitation during the 6-week tournament.

With millions of global travelers expected to visit the United States — many for the first time — the program focuses on ensuring destinations are ready not only operationally, but culturally and strategically, to deliver a world-class visitor experience.

“Over the next several years, the United States will be on a global stage unlike anything we’ve seen before,” said Lisa Simon, CEO of IITA. “This is a defining moment for our industry. How we welcome international visitors — at every touchpoint — will shape perceptions of the U.S. for years to come.”

In addition to IITA and DI, other industry associations have supported the initiative by helping to promote training opportunities to their members: American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA), Hotel Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI), International GLBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA), Hostel International USA (HIUSA).

“Preparing to welcome the world is a shared responsibility,” Simon added. “By working together as an industry, we can ensure that visitors leave the United States with experiences that inspire them to return — and to share their stories with others.”

“This is a moment that calls for industry-wide collaboration. Destinations International is proud to work alongside IITA and other partners to ensure communities are prepared to welcome international visitors and deliver experiences that inspire repeat visitation and long-term impact,” added Gretchen Hall, Chief Operating Officer, Destinations International.

The International Readiness Training Program includes a foundational briefing – **offered at no cost to participants** - covering:

- The strategic importance and economic impact of international inbound travel
- How international visitors differ from domestic travelers
- Cultural expectations and service considerations
- How global travelers plan, book, and move through destinations
- The role of the inbound travel trade

The program was developed primarily for host cities, base camp destinations, and surrounding communities, but is open to anyone at no cost. In addition, destinations may participate in customized, in-depth training programs tailored to their needs, including:

- **Deep Dive Cultural Readiness Training** customizable for specific international markets
- **Hospitality Excellence Training** for frontline and management teams
- **Inbound Insider Steps to Success™**, focused on building and strengthening inbound business through travel trade distribution
- **Tourism for All**, a community-based framework supporting inclusive, sustainable destination development

While the initiative was catalyzed by the upcoming global football tournament in 2026, IITA emphasized that the program is designed to create long-term benefits for the U.S. travel industry.

“This is not just about a single event,” said Simon. “This is about strengthening the foundation of international travel to the United States — ensuring destinations are not only ready for what’s coming but positioned for sustained growth well into the future.”

For more information about the International Readiness Training Program or to inquire about participation, contact Julie Heizer, IITA Ambassador, at [julie.heizer@inboundtravel.org](mailto:julie.heizer@inboundtravel.org).

### **About the International Inbound Travel Association (IITA)**

The International Inbound Travel Association (IITA) is the national association representing the U.S. inbound travel industry, including inbound tour operators, suppliers, and destination organizations. IITA serves as a leading voice for international inbound travel to the United States through advocacy, education, and industry collaboration.