



**TACVB 2025 Winter Conference
Advocacy and Community Relations Track**

AGENDA

Your facilitator: Meg Winchester, Vice President, Fired Up! Culture

Wednesday, January 22

8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

BREAKFAST

8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Welcome in the Breakfast Room

9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Introductions

- Instructor and participant introductions
- Agenda overview
- “What is the top item keeping you up at night?”

9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Lessons Learned (Panel discussion)

Learn how several of your colleagues have gotten into trouble, lost their jobs, or have experienced budget cuts, and learn what you can do to stay out of the spotlight and defend yourself and your organization.

Panelists: Jay Burress, Executive Vice President, Tourism, Hunden Partners, and Craig Davis, President & CEO, Visit Dallas

Moderated by Jack Johnson, Chief Advocacy Officer, Destinations International

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Table discussions

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

BREAK

10:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**Unveiling the 2024 US Resident Sentiment Towards Tourism Findings
(presentation and Q & A)**

Step into the forefront of industry knowledge with an overview of Longwoods International’s 2024 U.S. Resident Sentiment Study key findings and insights. This extensive research captures a wide range of demographics, offering fresh perspectives and actionable insights into how residents perceive tourism’s role in their communities. This year’s study is meticulously crafted to showcase evolving public sentiments, priorities, and expectations—providing you with the critical tools needed to shape policies, tailor communications, and enhance community engagement. Hear examples from one local destination, Visit Dallas, on how the organization has used their own residents’ opinions to better educate, implement change, and interact with the local community.

Presented by Kelsey Waite, Director of Client Engagement, Longwoods International and Michael Rudowski, Vice President of Research & Insights, Visit Dallas

11:30 a.m. – Noon

Building Bridges: Strengthening Communities Through EDC Collaboration

Join Aaron Werner of Visit McKinney and Michael Kowski of the McKinney EDC as they discuss how they work together to create a unified vision for their community's success. Learn how aligning goals and open communication can enhance collaboration, drive impactful initiatives, and strengthen your community's foundation for growth.

Presented by Aaron Werner, Visit McKinney and Michael Kowski, McKinney EDC

NOON - 1:00 p.m.

LUNCH

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Advocacy in Action: Making Your Message Matter

How to Communicate with Policymakers from City Hall to the Halls of the Capitol

Lawmakers and leaders at all levels regularly make decisions that have the potential to impact you, your community, your organization, and your industry. An effective advocacy plan can help you influence their decisions and achieve your public policy goals. In this workshop, we will walk through a legislative case study from soup to nuts, giving you a blueprint to help you identify your policy goals and craft an advocacy plan that includes the right audience, the right message, and the right communications vehicles to deliver it. Overall, this will be a practical, hands-on workshop that demystifies the policy process and provides you with tools to help your organization achieve your policy goals.

Takeaways:

- Understand the “dos and don’ts” of lawmaker engagement
- Learn how to craft a surround sound campaign (no matter your budget)
- Identify how to unearth powerful stories that will drive home policy change
- Develop key components of your advocacy message

Presented by Jenifer Sarver, Principal, Sarver Strategies

2:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Break

2:45 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Advocacy in Action Session Continues

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Being Known, Valued and Empowered

In 2019, Destinations International proposed that the tourism industry, and destination organizations in particular, should be recognized as a "community shared value" with a mission that is aligned with the community. The era of focusing solely on the number of visitors or “heads in beds” is now over. Investment in tourism promotion cannot be regarded as a secondary priority or a luxury to be reserved for times of surplus. Travel and tourism are essential to a community's survival, on par with education, healthcare, emergency response, and utilities. However, for travel and tourism to flourish as a common good, it must be regarded by all members of the community as a valuable and indispensable component of the local way of life - an effort aligned with their values that leverages the power of travel to achieve a community's goals. And we are not just destination marketers, salespeople, or managers; we are community stewards. This presentation will take the concept of community shared value to its natural and essential conclusion—a vision where we act as destination stewards and are fully known, deeply valued, and truly empowered.

Presented by Jack Johnson, Chief Advocacy Officer, Destinations International

Thursday, January 23

8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

BREAKFAST

8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Welcome in the Breakfast Room

9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Recap Day 1

9:15 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Unlocking the Power of Placemaking: Elevating Destinations for a Thriving Future

Discover how placemaking integrates sales, marketing, and advocacy to transform destinations into vibrant places where people want to live, work, play, and visit. This session delves into the next evolution of Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and travel products, focusing on enhancing community quality of life, economic vitality, and civic pride.

Participants will gain actionable insights on:

1. Defining placemaking and its significance.
2. Understanding what visitors seek and how it shapes a city's identity—ensuring you have a compelling product to market.
3. Steps to becoming actively involved and making a strategic impact in your community.
4. Identifying your organization's role in intentional placemaking efforts.
5. Overcoming resource and influence limitations to make a difference.
6. Learning from case studies of small to mid-sized destinations that have successfully implemented placemaking strategies.

Join us to explore practical ways to influence the future of your destination through intentional, community-focused placemaking.

Presented by Jay Burress, Executive Vice President, Tourism, Hunden Partners

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

A New Age of Impact with DMO Attribution Models

As increased scrutiny and funding cuts become commonplace, the need for DMOs to effectively demonstrate the economic impact of their marketing efforts has never been more critical. In a new age of tracking and technology, destinations now have access to data that successfully translates their website and media initiatives into tangible metrics—for teams and stakeholders alike.

Join Tourism Economics to explore the ins and outs of attribution. We'll break down methodology, common limitations to consider, and powerful ways these insights can serve as a cutting-edge tool for advancing Texas DMOs. Cut through the noise and gain clarity around how DMOs can finally share the true economic impact of their website and media.

We'll cover:

1. The Fundamentals of Marketing Attribution: Learn the key concepts and methodologies that can help you analyze and interpret your marketing data.
 2. Impact on Advocacy Efforts: Understand how demonstrating the economic impact of your marketing efforts can strengthen your case with stakeholders and funding bodies.
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3. Real-World Applications: Explore case studies that illustrate successful attribution strategies and their influence on destination advocacy.
4. Get Educated: Understand the questions you should be asking attribution providers to best inform you upcoming decisions.

Presented by Zeek Coleman, Vice President, Americas, Tourism Economics

10:30 a.m.

BREAK

10:45 a.m. – NOON

Facilitated Shirtsleeves Session

Conference ends

