

**WISCONSIN**

— DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM —



# ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2023



# RECORD- BREAKING



## VISION:

**Grow our economic impact** at a higher rate than our competitors

## MISSION:

**Inspire travelers** to experience Wisconsin

View the full strategic plan [here](#).

# ABOUT US

## Wisconsin Council on Tourism

The 21 members of the Wisconsin Council on Tourism advise the Secretary of the Department on matters related to tourism. For a full list of current members of the Wisconsin Council on Tourism, please visit [our website](#).

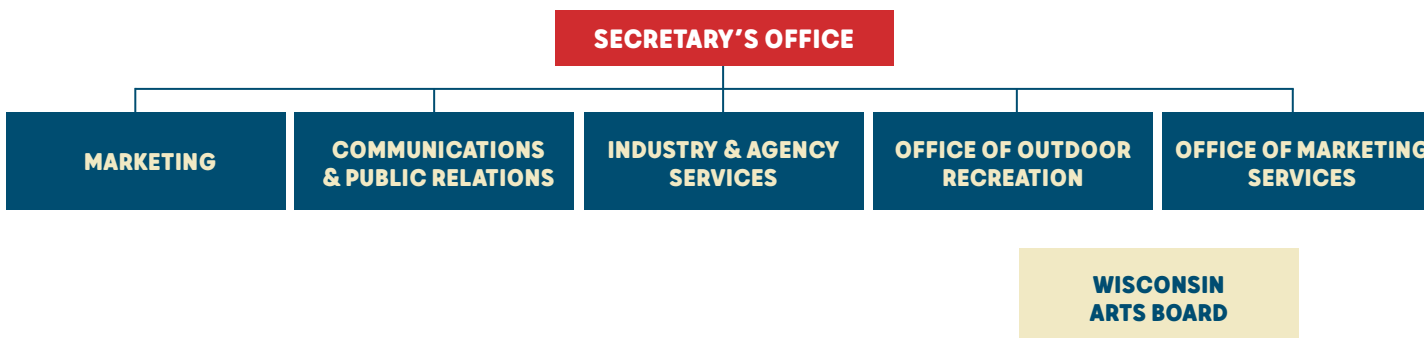
## Tourism Committees

Seven committees advise the agency in supporting the Wisconsin Department of Tourism's strategic plan.

- [Marketing Committee](#)
- [Tourist Information Center Grant Committee](#)
- [Joint Effort Marketing Grant Committee](#)
- [Outdoor Recreation Committee](#)
- [Meetings & Conventions Committee](#)
- [Diversity, Equity, Accessibility & Inclusion Committee](#)
- [Sports Marketing Committee](#)

## Staff

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism has position authority for 27 full time staff and a varying number of project positions. The Wisconsin Arts Board employs four staff. For a full list of current staff members, please visit our [staff directory](#). The Department has aligned its workforce and staffing arrangements and policies with DOA's "Anywhere in Wisconsin" vision beginning in 2021. This has expanded state job opportunities to residents throughout the state who possess Tourism expertise, increased productivity and employee satisfaction.



# AWARDS

## Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Hospitality Sales, Marketing and Revenue Optimization

Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI)

Shane Brossard, Chief Marketing Officer



## ESTO Mercury Award, Printed Collateral Materials

U. S. Travel Association

Wisconsin Travel Guide



## Bronze Award, PR - Feature Placement Online

HSMAI Adrian Awards

For online article in [Lonely Planet](#)





# FROM TOURISM SECRETARY ANNE SAYERS



Wisconsin is having a moment. A big moment. In just the past fiscal year, we've hosted the Fat Bike World Championships and the U.S. Senior Open, Milwaukee was named one of National Geographic's best places to visit in 2023, Appleton's Mile of Music festival was featured in Rolling Stone and the list goes on and on.

We seized this moment with big ideas, big plans and big goals and the results are, well, big. Wisconsin's record-breaking tourism economic impact in 2022 generated \$23.7 billion, surpassing the previous record of \$22.2 billion set in 2019. All 72 counties experienced an increase in total tourism economic impact compared to 2021.

This success is thanks to the unwavering commitment of so many, starting with our industry partners, from destination marketing organizations to business owners, our incredible frontline hospitality workers, and everyone in between. I'm so appreciative that Governor Evers remains tourism's biggest advocate. No one loves to #TravelWI more, and his genuine support of our industry always shines. I also want to thank the incredible bipartisan group of elected officials, without whose support, none of our work would be possible. Finally, I want to recognize the hardworking staff of the Department of Tourism. While they're committed to leading with data-driven strategy, I can also confirm the team leads with heart. We love our state. We love our industry. And we are honored to be charged with promoting Wisconsin as the perfect place for travelers to share moments of joy with friends and family.

Thank you to all who support this critical driver of Wisconsin's economy.

Take care and happy trails,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne N. Sayers".

Secretary Anne Sayers



# 2022 ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Department of Tourism is Wisconsin's smallest cabinet agency, with a base budget of less than \$17 million out of Wisconsin's \$89 billion budget, yet its economic impact is tremendous. Wisconsin tourism's record-breaking \$23.7 billion economic impact in 2022 demonstrates an incredible return on investment for Wisconsin. Every Wisconsin county saw growth in economic impact over 2021, showcasing the power of tourism as a significant economic driver in every corner of our state.

The record-breaking year was fueled by a record number of overnight trips, an important factor given that overnight visitors spend nearly three times as much as day visitors. By convincing more visitors to stay the night so they could add more activities to their itinerary, Wisconsin tourism delivered a deeper economic impact than ever before. This data also shows that despite economic factors, travelers are still prioritizing travel and when they do, they're choosing Wisconsin.



**\$23.7 billion**  
total business sales



**111.1 million**  
visitor trips



**174,000**  
jobs

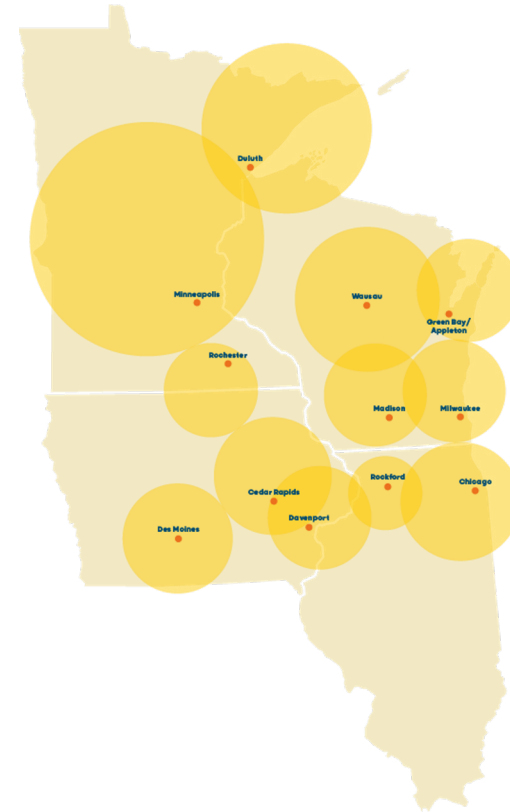




# MARKETING

Travel Wisconsin's campaigns continued to champion the brand idea of "Here's to Those Who Wisconsin," highlighting Wisconsin's celebratory spirit and unforgettable experiences. Maintaining the brand idea - in combination with advertising in the same 12 markets identified in the [Propensity to Visit Model](#) since March 2021 - intentionally builds consistency across seasons and reinforces Wisconsin as a preferred vacation destination. Season after season, learnings inform optimizations to maximize investment.

In addition to the brand campaigns, seasonal events campaigns showed off Wisconsin's spirited nature while providing the information event-seekers need to do their planning. The popular Fall Color Report and Wisconsin Snow Report also continued to serve as valuable resources to help travelers plan their adventures. And for the first time, we fully integrated the official Wisconsin Highway Map with Travel Wisconsin's brand to drive visitation to [TravelWisconsin.com](#), so travelers are right where they need to be to gain travel inspiration statewide. The map highlights a shortlist of [Wonders of Wisconsin](#), a crowdsourced list of some of the most unforgettable and awe-inspiring places to visit throughout the state. The map also marks the Wisconsin Welcome Centers for the very first time.



## FISCAL YEAR 2023 KEY METRICS

**848.1 million**

Advertising impressions

**9.4 million**

Web sessions

**93.6 million**

Social media reach (*Facebook and Instagram*)



# PUBLIC RELATIONS

Travel Wisconsin's public relations campaigns complemented marketing campaigns by building brand awareness, improving perception and extending the brand's reach beyond the advertising budget. This happens through a continuous cycle of identifying key media contacts, building relationships and proactively pitching unique stories. Wisconsin hosted individual journalists, small group familiarization trips and one large group familiarization trip to showcase Wisconsin's tourism offering firsthand. The team also attended in-person and virtual deskside visits to engage with writers and inspire them to visit Wisconsin to discover deeper opportunities for storytelling.

Travel Wisconsin continued to capitalize on the growing value of content creators as an effective way to leverage third-party credibility and tell authentic stories. Consistent engagement with creator content showed people are learning new things about Wisconsin that inspire their trip planning.

## FISCAL YEAR 2023 KEY PR METRICS

**658**

Stories

**3.7 billion**

Impressions

**48**

Virtual or in-person deskside appointments

**42**

Media visits

## FISCAL YEAR 2023 KEY CONTENT CREATOR METRICS

**17**

Content creator visits

**1.9 million**

Content creator impressions

**10%**

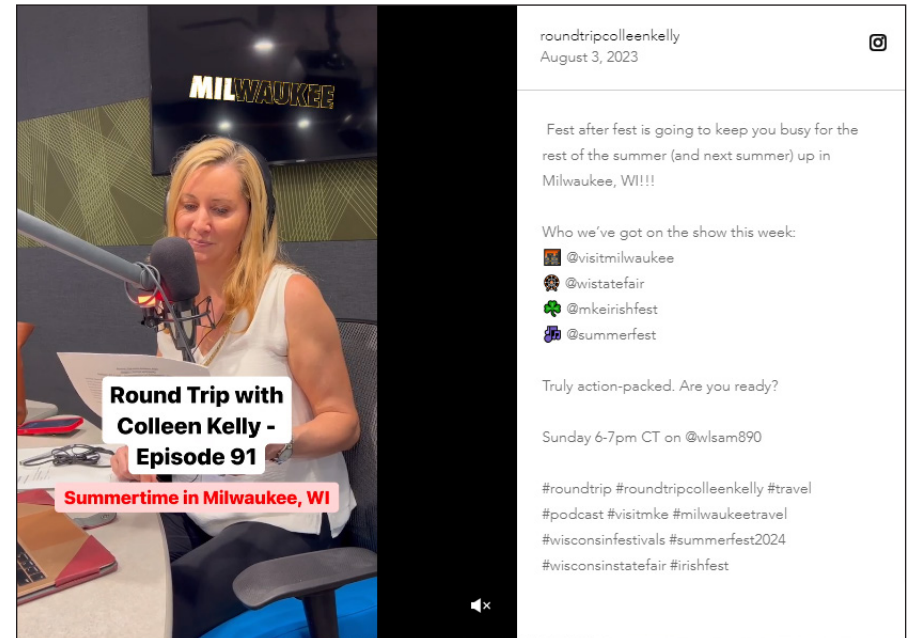
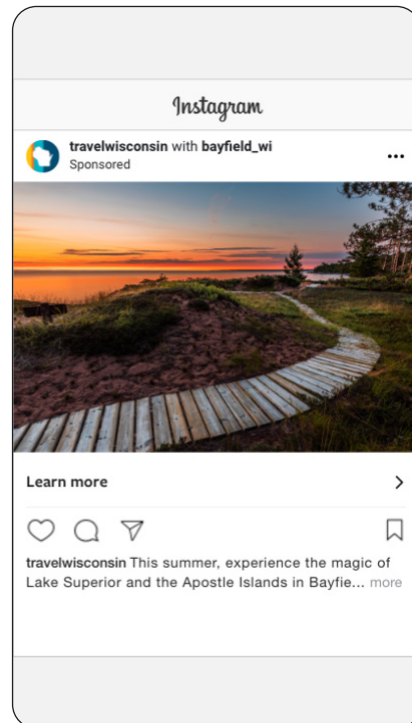
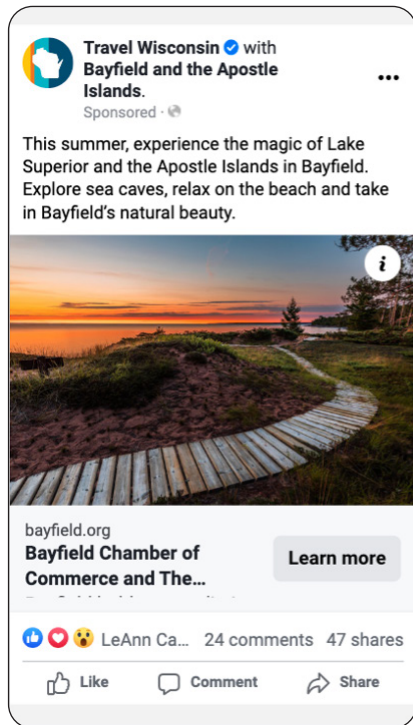
Engagement rate (1.8% industry standard)





# CO-OP PROGRAM

The Travel Wisconsin Co-op evolves each year to meet the needs of both partners and our consumers while delivering the greatest economic impact possible. Annual programs are designed to engage partners big and small across the state in shared vision and goals. The Co-op gives partners opportunities to stretch their dollars further, try new promotional tactics and programs, and to amplify their promotional strategies that would otherwise be budgetarily unattainable. The 2023 Co-op included 94 partnerships with an investment of \$203,140 by partners.



# INDUSTRY RELATIONS

Travel Wisconsin's industry relations programs provide the collaborative communication needed for the industry to share their on-the-ground experience with us and for Travel Wisconsin to provide relevant support. Each week, the industry relations team engaged our many tourism partners with our toolkit of resources, including grant programs, website listings, email newsletters, webinars and our refreshed Travel Green program. In fiscal year 2023, almost 300 partners took the Travel Green pledge. Additionally, the industry team recruited and coordinated 175 fall color and snow reporters to maintain the popular, consumer-facing seasonal reports on TravelWisconsin.com.

To improve the traveler experience, the six Wisconsin Welcome Centers were refreshed to reflect the Travel Wisconsin brand and modernized with new literature racks, signage and video screens. The Wisconsin Welcome Centers saw over 181,000 visitors in fiscal year 2023.

The Industry Relations team engaged consumers, the media, domestic and international tour operators, meeting/convention/sports planners, and tourism businesses at consumer and business-to-business trade shows. Our industry team participated in three consumer events alongside 49 of our partners. Additionally, we participated in five business-to-business trade shows, where we held 76 appointments with 22 partners.

The Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism (WIGCOT) is an annual event that connects industry partners, provides expert-led training and shares the excitement and strategy of Travel Wisconsin campaigns. This year's conference at the KI Center in Green Bay saw more than 700 registered attendees, more breakout sessions covering a wider breadth of topics than ever before and a record number of nominees for the Governor's Tourism Awards (73!).

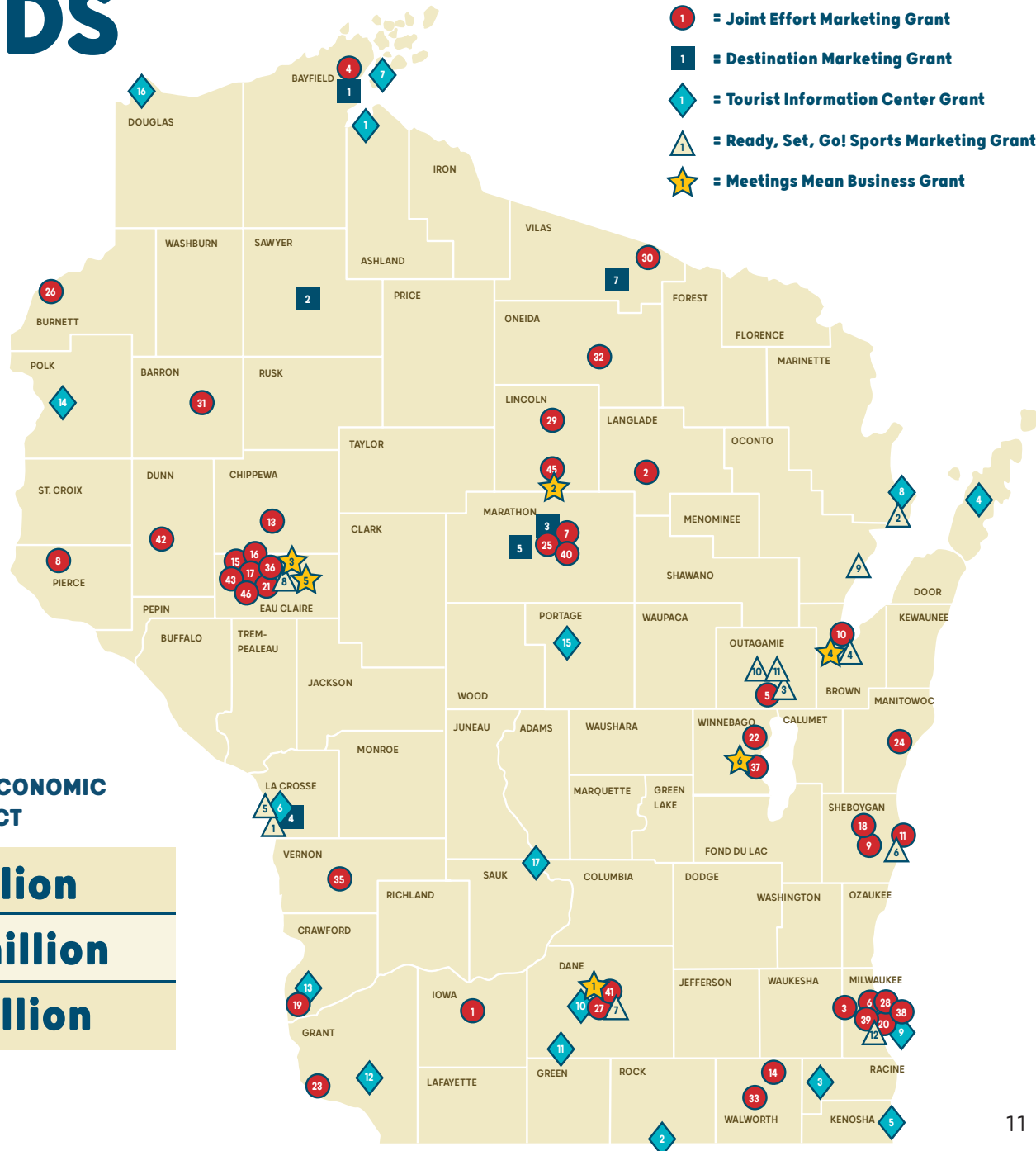




FISCAL YEAR 2023

# GRANT AWARDS

Click [here](#) to view all grant reports in detail. The map notes where the grant recipient is located; however, economic impact and reach of each project extends well beyond the community and county. This remains one of the Department's most popular industry programs.



**GRANT AWARD AMOUNTS  
(FISCAL YEAR 2023)**

**ESTIMATED ECONOMIC  
IMPACT**

|            |                                |                       |
|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>JEM</b> | <b>\$1,143,869</b>             | <b>\$42 million</b>   |
| <b>RSG</b> | <b>\$128,051<sup>.50</sup></b> | <b>\$13.5 million</b> |
| <b>MMB</b> | <b>\$103,371</b>               | <b>\$4.3 million</b>  |

# WISCONSIN OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

The Office of Outdoor Recreation continues to provide trusted resources, tools and connections to grow the economic impact of the outdoor recreation industry by supporting the efforts of partners - destinations, businesses, manufacturers, guides and nonprofits.

## Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Inventory

This innovative new tool stores information about recreation sites for 12 outdoor activities in a single place, whether the sites are managed at the federal, state or local level or by nonprofits. For the first time, this data is available to download and will help businesses and communities realize projects to promote recreation destinations, inform infrastructure priorities, secure funding and more.

## Workforce attraction tool

In consultation with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, the Office published a 16-page tool highlighting Wisconsin's outdoor recreation offerings, lifestyle and industry to assist employers in their talent recruitment efforts. The customizable tool was downloaded by more than 100 businesses from all sectors, with more than 600 individual copies distributed.

## Toolkits & collaborative activations

Bringing cross-industry and agency partners together to collaborate resulted in the first-ever Wisconsin Healthy Communities Summit and a second year of the Look-for-Local initiative at Canoecopia.

## Wisconsin Trail Report

In its third season, the report had an 832% increase in pageviews, confirming that the tool is helping residents and visitors plan time on trails.

## Outdoor Business Directory

Another first-of-its-kind resource, the directory grew its listings by 16%, proving it's a valuable tool for businesses and organizations to connect.

## Wisconsin Outside

A monthly staple for the industry, the newsletter open rate grew 42% and continues to deliver news and resources while amplifying the innovations advancing outdoor recreation.

## Educational webinars and panels

Reaching the industry through on-demand webinars, conference panels and speaking engagements, the Office brings relevant education to stakeholders. The Office hosted two webinars for over 130 people, which was viewed over 190 times on YouTube.





# FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT TRAIL

Since its launch in 2017, the Frank Lloyd Wright Trail has garnered worldwide media coverage and attracted travelers from near and far. The Frank Lloyd Wright Trail is a valuable storytelling opportunity for Travel Wisconsin. Taliesin, which is Wisconsin's only UNESCO World Heritage site open to the public, is a highlight of the fall ad campaign. The trail is mentioned in social media posts, our official travel guide, 30 TravelWisconsin.com articles and six earned media placements in [New York Times](#), [Toronto Star](#) and [WTMJ](#).

## » TORONTO STAR «

### For architecture enthusiasts, Wisconsin is arguably the best place to understand Frank Lloyd Wright's legacy

America's most famous architect lived in Madison from ages 11 to 20, and built Taliesin — his primary home for 48 years — in nearby Spring Green.

By Lucas Aykroyd Special to the Star





# TRIBAL TOURISM


The Department of Tourism is proud to help travelers experience the distinct traditions and cultural heritage of Wisconsin's 11 federally recognized tribal nations. Native culture is woven into the fabric of our state and provides incredible experiences for travelers to enjoy. A few promotion examples include five social media posts, inclusion in our official travel guide, advertorials in the Traveler magazine, 11 TravelWisconsin.com articles and 22 earned media placements in outlets including [Thrillist](#), [Condé Nast Traveler](#), [Round Trip with Colleen Kelly](#) and [WUWM](#).

**WUWM 89.7**  
MILWAUKEE'S **MP1** ♥ Donate

## Ways to infuse Native American culture into a Wisconsin winter getaway

WUWM 89.7 FM | By [Becky Mortensen](#) f t e  
Published November 18, 2022 at 2:02 PM CST

**▶ LISTEN • 13:05**




**thrillist** SUBSCRIBE

## For Some Native Farmers, Agriculture Is a Form of Resistance

In different corners of America, Indigenous communities reclaim culinary heritage and identity.

By [Emily Saladino](#)  
Published on 11/16/2022 at 3:00 PM



Corn and sunflowers at Ukwakthwa | Photo by Emily Saladino





# OFFICE OF MARKETING SERVICES



The Office of Marketing Services provides marketing consultation services to other agencies, councils, commissions and boards in Wisconsin state government. Through the office, agencies can access skilled staff and resources to help bring big ideas to life.

## Projects supported by the Office of Marketing Services in fiscal year 2023 include:

August 2022 Governor's Conference on Highway Safety

October 2022 Crime Lab Symposium

October 2022 Governor's Cyber Security Summit

October 2022 Women in Cybersecurity

November 2022 Wisconsin Fall Conference on Tourism

February 2023 Statewide Procurement Virtual Conference

February 2023 Department of Transportation Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Conference

March 2023 Governor's Conference on Emergency Management & Homeland Security

March 2023 Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism

Department of Tourism Meetings & Conventions Marketing Project Management

Department of Tourism Sports Marketing Project Management

Department of Veterans Affairs - Marketing and Website - Consultant

Department of Health Services - Adult Protective Services Public Awareness Campaign - Consultant

Department of Workforce Development - Job Center Brand Project - Consultant



# DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM **BUDGET**



In fiscal year 2023, the Department of Tourism had receipts from state and one-time federal sources of \$23,534,699.88. In fiscal year 2023, Tourism had total expenses of \$23,934,579.54, which included \$5,894,756.79 of federal expenses. Excess expenses over the available amount to spend resulted from revenues collected in prior years and the related expenses recorded later in fiscal year 2023.



# CONTACT INFORMATION



## Wisconsin Department of Tourism

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Madison, WI 53708-8690

(608) 266-2161

### Travel Wisconsin Social Media



### Tourism Industry Social Media



The Wisconsin Department of Tourism would like to thank decision makers, agency partners, Wisconsin Council on Tourism members, committee members and industry stakeholders for supporting our mission to inspire visitors to experience Wisconsin.

