TEMPE TOURISM

TEMPE IGNITED



A STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT FOR DESTINATION LEADERSHIP

OCTOBER 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Tempe Tourism Office contracted with Clarity of Place Inc., to create a Strategic Plan for Tourism that identifies opportunities for Tempe Tourism and its stakeholders to leverage the city's unique product mix to optimize visitation and continue to inspire visitors to experience all parts of Tempe.

Clarity of Place would like to thank the numerous individuals and organizations who took time out of their schedules to provide insights and context for this Plan. Special thanks goes to the Tempe Tourism staff who offered their expertise, guidance, and direction to ensure the Plan is aligned with the long-term goals of the community.

Additionally, Clarity of Place would like to thank the Tempe Tourism Board of Directors. Their guidance and input were integral in understanding the current state and ambitions of Tempe and the role of tourism within the city.





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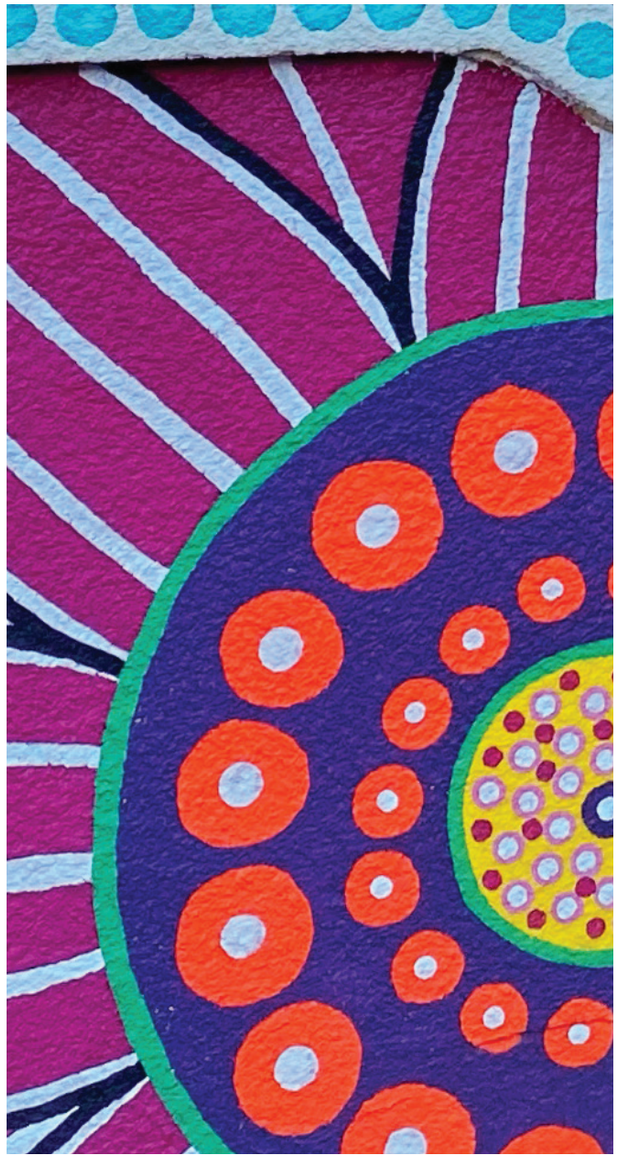
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tempe's visitor economy is entering a transformative era—one where the city's distinct identity and strengths must be boldly articulated and leveraged to stand apart in an increasingly competitive marketplace to inspire overnight visitation. Unlike neighboring cities, Tempe's appeal is rooted in a unique blend of innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability. While anchored by Arizona State University (ASU), Tempe's identity extends far beyond the campus. Tempe's evolution from a college town to a dynamic, multi-faceted community is evident in its thriving corporate sector, entrepreneurial spirit, and nationally recognized leadership in diversity and environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, ASU remains a powerful driver, infusing the city with creative energy, global talent, and a steady influx of visitors.

Tempe Ignited represents a call to action: to steward, curate, and advocate for Tempe's sense of place through the visitor economy in ways that generate economic activity for local businesses, foster community pride, and ensure the city's continued vibrancy for residents and visitors alike. Tourism is not simply about attracting more visitors—it is about orchestrating and connecting experiences that reflect Tempe's authentic character, supporting locally-owned businesses, and investing in placemaking that enhances quality of place. By intentionally differentiating Tempe's brand as a destination and focusing on its "owned niches"—from its innovative business ecosystem and vibrant arts scene to its commitment to accessibility and sustainability—Tempe can attract higher-value visitors and deepen engagement across all segments of the community.

Through Tempe Ignited, the Tempe Tourism Office's role is to serve as both a champion and catalyst: aligning the interests of local businesses, cultural organizations, and civic leaders to maximize the impact of the visitor economy. This requires moving beyond traditional destination promotion to embrace destination curation and advocacy—actively shaping the city's narrative, improving visitor readiness, and advocating for investments that benefit residents and businesses alike. Through well-established strategic partnerships with the City of Tempe, Arizona State University, the Tempe Chamber, and the Downtown Tempe Authority, Tempe Tourism has worked and continues to work to create seamless, connected



experiences that benefit both visitors and residents. These collaborative partnerships serve as the foundation for an evolved model of collaborative destination development, positioning Tempe Tourism to serve as a more proactive connector and facilitator rather than merely the city's tourism marketing entity.

As Tempe continues to grow and evolve as a destination, the strategy offered by Tempe Ignited emphasizes the importance of operational excellence, funding resilience, and continuous adaptation. By investing in digital innovation; refining and optimizing strategic promotion and engagement with priority visitor segments; sharing actionable market intelligence with destination partners and prioritizing professional development for the Office's talented and passionate staff, Tempe Tourism will remain agile and effective in a rapidly changing landscape. The organization's ongoing collaboration with all destination partners demonstrates its commitment to integrated placemaking and a community-centered visitor economy.

Ultimately, this strategic plan provides a blueprint for Tempe to thrive as a welcoming, innovative, and sustainable destination—one that is shaped by ASU's influence but defined by much more. The success of this vision will depend on the active participation of stakeholders across the city, united by a shared commitment to Tempe's future as a place where tourism drives prosperity and community pride.

PLAN INPUTS

PRODUCT INVENTORY

Assessment of Tempe's physical assets, current visitor experience options and lodging supply, as well as demand-generating product.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Real-time discussions with key stakeholders and survey responses for feedback on the visitor economy.

PERFORMANCE DATA

Data and research compiled by Tempe Tourism to understand past performance.

COMP SET DATA

Industry data on changes in travel behavior and high-level comparison against a comparative set.

CONSUMER DATA

Visitor survey, geolocation and other market data to understand who is visiting Tempe.

POLICIES

Review of local and state policies that affect the travel and hospitality industry and the infrastructure available to visitors.

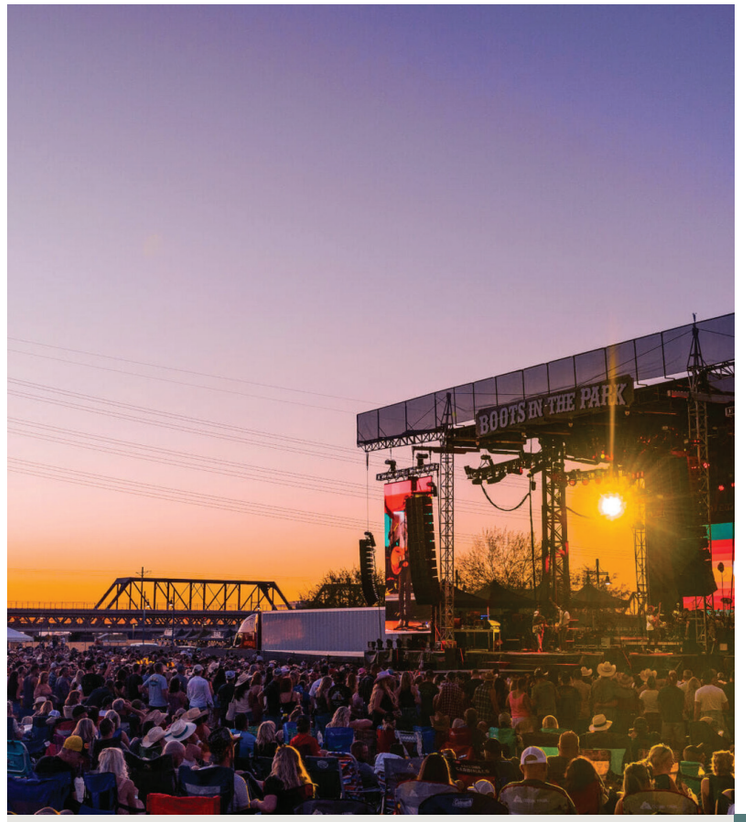
WHY PLAN

Strategic planning is vital for Tempe's continued competitiveness and long-term prosperity as a destination, especially within the fast-evolving landscape of the greater Phoenix region. Tempe Tourism has built a strong, results-driven program that has consistently delivered value to the community through focused annual operating and marketing plans. These efforts have elevated Tempe's brand as a destination, driven record visitor spending, and supported local businesses.

Tempe Ignited is both a documentation of that success and a forward-looking exercise—designed to give the organization the tools and direction to be more intentional in maximizing tourism's contribution to Tempe and its community for years to come.

Tempe Tourism's approach is rooted in the city's core values: a commitment to innovation, inclusivity, sustainability, and authentic placemaking. The plan reflects the city's evolution from a college town anchored by Arizona State University into a dynamic, multifaceted destination with a thriving corporate base, creative community, and nationally recognized leadership in diversity and environmental sustainability. By aligning with these values and building on the city's unique strengths, the strategy ensures that Tempe's visitor economy growth benefits residents, supports locally-owned businesses, and enhances Tempe's quality of place.

Tempe Ignited documents the current work of Tempe Tourism and its partners, synthesizing recent accomplishments—such as a successful brand refresh, expanded digital marketing, and innovative event programming—with additional strategies to connect the city's diverse assets and extend the benefits of tourism throughout the community. The strategy is grounded in robust data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and benchmarking against best practices from leading destinations, ensuring that Tempe's strategies are both locally relevant and globally informed. It provides a clear, actionable blueprint for the next five years, guiding Tempe Tourism as it deepens partnerships, strengthens operational excellence, and advances innovative approaches to destination management.



TEMPE TOURISM

MISSION

Fostering Tempe's economic growth by inspiring travelers to visit and explore our city.

VISION

To establish Tempe as a travel destination where every visitor feels inspired and welcomed

Spanning a five-year horizon, ***Tempe Ignited*** sets ambitious yet flexible goals that allow Tempe Tourism to remain nimble in response to emerging opportunities and challenges. Its scope encompasses all aspects of the visitor economy—from marketing and sales to placemaking, community engagement, and organizational development—ensuring a holistic, integrated approach to destination stewardship.

Tempe Ignited is not just about attracting more visitors, but about optimizing the visitor experience, supporting local business growth, and building community pride.

Finally, the strategy addresses the critical need for funding resilience and operational sustainability. Recognizing the uncertainties around traditional revenue streams, it includes the first steps to building a strategic funding roadmap to diversify income sources, build reserves, and advocate for policies that reflect the expanded role of tourism in Tempe's economic and community development. By planning for organizational sustainability, Tempe Tourism is positioned to continue delivering value and innovation while leveraging the visitor economy as an engine for Tempe's long-term urban vitality, fostering community resilience and sustainable growth that benefits residents and visitors alike.

In summary, ***Tempe Ignited*** is both a testament to Tempe Tourism's achievements and a guide for the destination's next chapter. It ensures Tempe not only competes effectively in the regional and national marketplace to attract overnight visitors, but also continues to serve as a model for inclusive, sustainable, and community-driven destination development—delivering shared value for all.

PROCESS TO CRAFT *TEMPE IGNITED*

The development of Tempe's five-year strategic tourism plan followed a comprehensive and collaborative process designed to ensure ***Tempe Ignited*** is grounded in data, community insight, and industry best practices. The process began with an in-depth collection and analysis of tourism and economic data, including visitor trends, spending patterns, and regional market dynamics. This quantitative foundation was complemented by a benchmarking study comparing Tempe's visitor economy, organizational structure, and programming to similar destinations, helping to identify Tempe's competitive advantages and areas for growth.

Engagement with a broad range of stakeholders was a key component of the methodology. Input was gathered through surveys, focus groups, and interviews with representatives from the hospitality sector, local businesses, cultural organizations, city leadership, and community groups. These conversations provided valuable perspectives on Tempe's strengths, challenges, and future opportunities, ensuring the strategy reflects the diverse interests and aspirations of those invested in the city's visitor economy success. A leadership work session with the Tempe Tourism Board and senior staff further refined the strategic direction.

The findings from data analysis and stakeholder engagement were synthesized into a detailed SWOT analysis, which assessed Tempe's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the competitive regional landscape. This comprehensive assessment formed the basis for identifying strategic imperatives and actionable recommendations that will guide Tempe Tourism's efforts to optimize the visitor economy, enhance community shared value, and build a resilient, inclusive destination.

STRATEGY IMPERATIVES

Tempe Ignited is anchored by a set of imperatives that respond directly to the city's unique strengths and challenges, ensuring tourism is a catalyst for economic growth, placemaking, and community pride. These imperatives guide Tempe Tourism and its partners in actively stewarding the city's evolving identity, supporting local businesses, and differentiating Tempe in a competitive travel landscape. The imperatives position Tempe as a vibrant, innovative, and welcoming destination—one that leverages its unique assets to generate economic opportunity, celebrate local character, and build lasting community pride.

01 **Elevate and Differentiate Tempe's Brand**
Tempe's brand should boldly stand out by showcasing its unique blend of innovation, inclusivity, sustainability, urban energy, and a progressive mindset driven by residents and the city's corporate base. By highlighting these genuine strengths and targeting travelers who value diversity, creativity, and environmental stewardship, Tempe can attract high-value visitors and foster community pride, cementing its reputation as a forward-thinking urban oasis.

02 **Connect the Destination and Increase Visitor Readiness**
Tempe's appeal lies in its variety—dynamic downtown, quality hotels, outdoor recreation, arts, culture, and a vibrant food scene. The opportunity is to connect these assets, encouraging visitors to explore broadly and use Tempe as a base for Arizona travels. This approach lengthens stays, increases spending, supports local businesses, and ensures the community benefits from tourism.

03 **Reposition Tempe Tourism's Value to the Community**
Tourism drives Tempe's economy, supporting jobs and generating tax revenue that funds key public services. By clearly communicating tourism's positive impacts and aligning with community goals, Tempe Tourism can build stakeholder support, foster partnerships, and show how the visitor economy enhances quality of place for all.

04 **Advance Operational Excellence and Knowledge Sharing**
Fulfilling Tempe Tourism's mission to promote and manage the destination requires operational excellence. Investing in staff, adopting proven practices, and sharing data with partners will increase tourism's impact. This commitment ensures the organization stays agile, collaborative, and innovative in destination management.

05 **Develop a Strategic Funding Roadmap**
Operational resilience is key to sustaining and growing Tempe Tourism's initiatives and impact. By diversifying revenue, planning for contingencies, and exploring new funding, Tempe Tourism can protect its operations and keep investing in programs that benefit the economy and community. This approach ensures long-term stability and adaptability in a changing travel market.

SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Understanding Tempe's current position as a destination is essential for charting its strategic path forward and maximizing the impact of the visitor economy. The situational assessment provides a critical foundation for informed decision-making by establishing baseline data on the city's tourism assets, competitive position, and operational capacity.

The situational assessment examines how Tempe's unique blend of urban innovation, cultural diversity, and university and corporate energy positions it as a destination for overnight visitors, while identifying both the strengths that differentiate Tempe and the challenges that must be addressed to sustain the city's visitor economy growth.

A. DESTINATION OVERVIEW

By evaluating Tempe's geographic advantages, attraction portfolio, and organizational structure, this assessment creates a strong understanding to develop targeted strategies that leverage the city's authentic character while building resilience for the destination's future. The insights gathered serve as a compass, ensuring that the resulting recommendations for Tempe Tourism are grounded in reality and aligned with the destination's true potential and community values.

"Tempe is very eclectic...We're not only eclectic in our people...but also in what we offer and the makeup of our community, architecturally and amenities wise."



GEOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Tempe is a vibrant city located in the heart of the Phoenix metropolitan area, bordered by Phoenix, Scottsdale, Mesa, Chandler, and the Salt River Pima–Maricopa Indian Community. Covering just over 40 square miles, Tempe has a mix of urban density in its northern neighborhoods—anchored by the Valley Metro Line and downtown core—and more residential, lower-density development to the south. The city's landscape is defined by landmarks such as Tempe Town Lake and Hayden Butte ("A" Mountain), as well as ASU's main campus. Tempe's desert climate brings hot summers, mild winters, and over 300 days of sunshine annually. The city is proximate to Sky Harbor International Airport, as well as Mesa Gateway Airport (the former's reliever airport).

With a 2023 population of approximately 190,000, Tempe is one of Arizona's most diverse and youthful cities, in part due to the presence of ASU. The city's demographic profile skews younger than the regional average, with a significant proportion of residents in the 18-34 age range. Tempe's population reflects a broad mix of cultures and backgrounds, contributing to its reputation as a welcoming, progressive, and inclusive community.

KEY ATTRACTIONS AND ASSETS INVENTORY

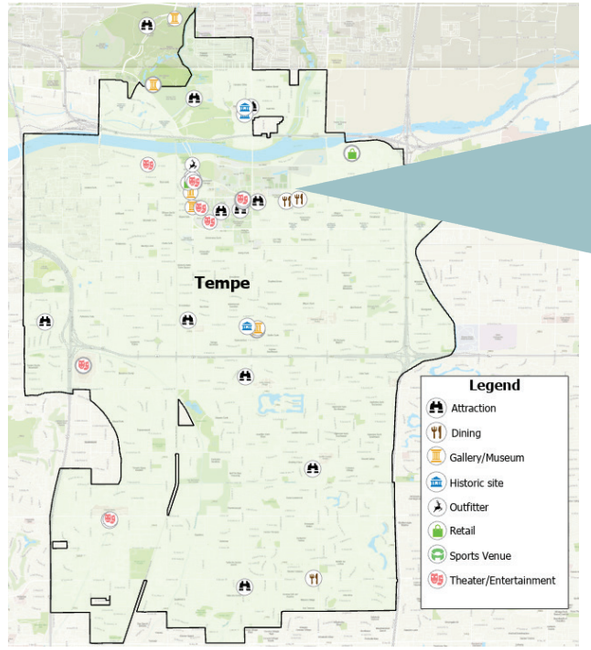
Tempe's appeal as a destination is rooted in the diversity and connectivity of its assets rather than a single marquee attraction. The city's hospitality infrastructure includes more than 7,100 hotel rooms, a walkable downtown and compact, and a robust culinary scene featuring both local favorites and nationally recognized establishments.

Tempe Town Lake serves as a recreational hub, hosting boating, festivals, and public art installations, while nearby Papago Park and Hayden Butte offer hiking and scenic views.

Downtown Tempe serves as the heart of the city's activity with its mix of local restaurants, events, and walkable streetscape. In 2024, a refresh of Mill Avenue's streetscape was begun and is anticipated to be completed in early 2026. This effort provides a renewed opportunity to reintroduce the Mill Avenue District to those who have not visited Downtown Tempe for some time while inspiring new visitors to discover its evolving offerings.

Cultural and entertainment offerings are anchored by venues such as the Tempe Center for the Arts, ASU Gammage, and a dynamic calendar of events including the Arizona Aloha Festival, Innings Festival, and Tempe Festival of the Arts.

TEMPE KEY DESTINATION ATTRACTIONS



DOWNTOWN TEMPE

- Walkable urban core centered on Mill Avenue
- 100+ shops, restaurants, and entertainment spots
- Vibrant year-round events and festivals
- Close to ASU and Tempe Town Lake
- Streetscape refresh and new dining concepts underway



ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY: A FOUNDATIONAL ASSET

Arizona State University is central to Tempe's identity and visitor economy. As one of the nation's largest and most innovative universities, ASU injects youthful energy and global diversity into the city's fabric. The university draws prospective students, families, alumni, conference attendees, and sports fans year-round, generating significant hotel demand and supporting local businesses. High-profile events such as NCAA Championships, academic conferences, and cultural festivals with ties to ASU further amplify Tempe's visibility and economic vitality. While ASU is a powerful anchor, Tempe's evolution beyond its college-town roots is evident in its growing corporate sector, innovation ecosystem, and inclusive community values.

Sports and group travel are major drivers. Tempe was named a **Top 50 Meeting Destination** in North America by CVENT in 2024; the designation reflects the city's growing appeal for association conferences and corporate retreats.

Tempe's sports group travel is grounded in collegiate and youth and amateur markets, as well as its status as a host for **Major League Baseball Spring Training**. The city's sports facilities and venues include **Mountain America Stadium** (ASU's football stadium), Mullett Arena (ice hockey/esports with 5,000-seat capacity), and **Tempe Diablo Stadium** (spring training baseball hub). The **Tempe Sports Complex** is a 60-acre, multi-purpose fields facility that competes with Mesa's Arizona Athletic Grounds and Gilbert's Cactus Yards for youth and amateur sports tournament play.

The city's commitment to sustainability is evident in its bike-friendly infrastructure, multi-modal transportation, sustainable hotel practices, and ongoing environmental initiatives.

TEMPE'S DESTINATION VALUE

Tempe's strength lies in weaving together these experiences—arts, culture, outdoor recreation, sports, and dining—into a cohesive visitor journey. Rather than relying on a single demand driver, Tempe Tourism's new website encourages exploration across neighborhoods and attractions from a consumer perspective. The tone and content on the website position Tempe as an elevated choice and an ideal base for visitors to discover both the city and the wider Phoenix region.

TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT

Tourism is a vital economic engine for Tempe, underpinning thousands of jobs and generating substantial economic activity. A study by Tourism Economics found that in 2024, Tempe welcomed 4.5 million visitors whose direct spending totaled $1.1 billion and resulted in a total economic impact of $1.5 billion for the city. This activity supported more than 8,800 jobs (6.0% of all jobs in Tempe) and generated $120 million in state and local tax revenue. The city's visitor economy is bolstered by leisure travel, meetings, sports, and special events, which drive both overnight stays and day-trip visitation. As competition intensifies across the region, Tempe's ability to connect its diverse assets and foster a sense of place will be critical to sustaining and growing these impacts.



Source: ***Economic Impact of Visitors to Tempe, AZ***
Tourism Economics May 2025

B. DESTINATION VULNERABILITIES

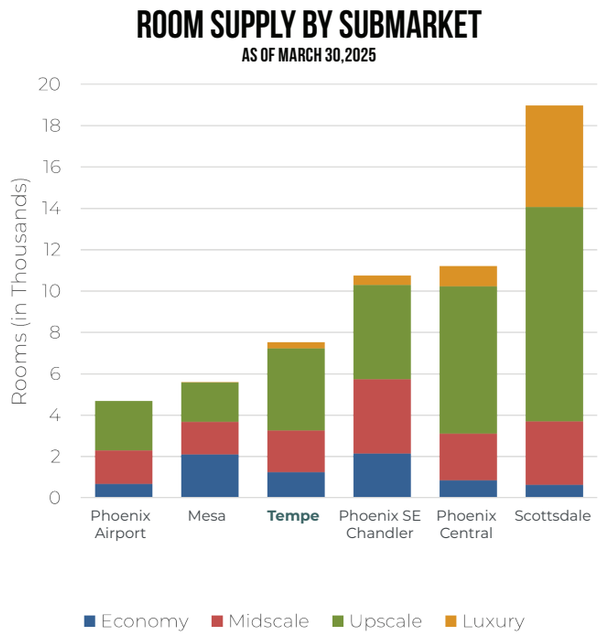
REGIONAL COMPETITION AND EAST VALLEY DYNAMICS

Being in the East Valley offers Tempe both advantages and challenges. Its proximity to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and direct access to major interstates (I-10, US-60, Loop 202) are significant assets, making Tempe one of the most accessible cities in the region for both leisure and business travelers. This connectivity encourages visitors to use Tempe as a base for exploring the Valley and beyond and supports strong group and transient travel. Tempe competes directly with neighboring cities like Scottsdale, Mesa, and Chandler, each investing heavily in new attractions, luxury hotels, and destination marketing. This means Tempe must work harder to differentiate itself and communicate its unique value proposition to overnight visitors.

LODGING SUPPLY GROWTH AND OCCUPANCY PRESSURES

The East Valley is experiencing a surge in hotel development, with several new properties under construction or recently opened. Historically, the submarket has enjoyed high occupancy rates—often running in the 90% range—leading to periods where demand exceeded supply, especially during large events at ASU or Tempe Town Lake.

The recent and planned increase in lodging inventory in Tempe provides needed capacity and supports continued growth in room nights sold (which exceeded 1.75 million in calendar year 2024, up more than 18,000 from calendar year 2023).



Source: CoStar, Clarity of Place

However, as the regional hotel supply expands, Tempe faces the challenge of maintaining high occupancy and average daily rates, particularly during off-peak periods and summer months when demand is softer.

LIMITATIONS IN DEMAND DRIVERS AND MEETING SPACE

Unlike some destinations that have a single marquee attraction or a large conference center to anchor overnight visitation, Tempe's visitor appeal is built on the connectivity and diversity of its experiences—downtown entertainment, ASU events, outdoor recreation, and a robust calendar of festivals and sports. The absence of a major conference facility limits Tempe's ability to attract large-scale meetings and conventions.

LIMITED SPORTS FACILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE

A significant challenge facing Tempe's ability to capture the lucrative youth sports tourism market is the city's limited inventory of dedicated sports facilities compared to neighboring East Valley cities. While Tempe has invested in facilities like the 60-acre Tempe Sports Complex—featuring six lighted multi-purpose fields, four lighted baseball/softball fields, and eight pickleball courts—the city lacks the comprehensive, specialized infrastructure and participant amenities that regional competitors have developed.

For example, neighboring cities have made substantial investments in youth sports infrastructure that dwarf Tempe's offerings. Mesa's Arizona Athletic Grounds exemplifies this gap, spanning 280 acres with 158 fields and courts, including 50 indoor volleyball courts, 24 multipurpose fields, 41 pickleball courts, and 16 basketball courts. Similarly, Gilbert's Cactus Yards features eight scaled-down MLB replica fields and a 20,000-square-foot indoor pavilion, while Chandler's Snedigar Sports Complex offers 12 soccer fields, multiple baseball and softball diamonds, and specialized facilities across 90 acres. Scottsdale operates three major sports complexes totaling over 137 acres with numerous lighted international-sized fields.

This infrastructure disparity limits Tempe's ability to compete for major youth sports tournaments that generate significant hotel demand, especially during need periods.

ASU FACILITY LIMITATIONS

Although Arizona State University possesses world-class sports facilities including Mountain America Stadium, Mullett Arena, and the Sun Devil Fitness Complex (135,000 square feet of indoor space), NCAA compliance rules and university policies significantly restrict their availability for external events. ASU facilities command premium pricing, often making them cost-prohibitive for many youth sports organizers. Additionally, NCAA regulations limit how external groups can utilize university athletic facilities, particularly during academic periods and competitive seasons.

SEASONALITY AND CLIMATE VULNERABILITIES

Tempe's desert climate, while a draw in the fall and winter, presents challenges during the hot summer months. High temperatures can suppress leisure travel and outdoor event attendance, making it difficult to sustain high levels of visitation year-round. According to Arizona tourism data, the state's outdoor recreation industry, valued at $14 billion in 2023 with 20% growth, demonstrates the importance of weather-dependent activities to the regional economy. This seasonality puts pressure on hotels and attractions in the Valley to find creative ways to attract visitors during need periods.

URBAN GROWTH, AFFORDABILITY, AND COMMUNITY BALANCE

Rapid development in Tempe—including new hotels, multifamily housing, and mixed-use projects—brings both opportunities and tensions for Tempe as a destination. While new investment enhances the city's appeal and supports local businesses, it can also drive-up costs, contribute to gentrification, and create concerns about affordability and the preservation of local character. Local, independent businesses are particularly crucial for maintaining downtown character and differentiating destinations, as they create authentic sense of place that chain stores cannot replicate.

Mill Avenue exemplifies both the benefits and challenges of Tempe's urban evolution. Once dominated by family-owned establishments, the street has witnessed significant transformation in recent decades. Mill Avenue's character has evolved from its historic roots as a community gathering place anchored by locally-owned businesses who now compete with an influx of national brands. This shift has prompted concerns among destination stakeholders about the loss of Mill Avenue's distinctive character.

Destination stakeholders in this planning process also note the importance of balancing growth with efforts to maintain Tempe's welcoming, inclusive identity and support for small, independent businesses that differentiate the city from its neighbors. The challenge for Tempe moving forward is preserving space for the local entrepreneurs and unique businesses that create authentic visitor experiences while accommodating necessary growth and investment.

WHY DESTINATIONS CULTIVATE SOCIAL IMPACT

Across the tourism industry, social impact is now a core measure of success—emphasizing inclusive promotion and a welcoming environment for all visitors. This means fostering equitable economic opportunity, advocating for cultural and natural assets, investing in placemaking, and ensuring everyone can participate and benefit. Future-ready destinations focus on strengthening local economies, meeting community needs, reflecting stakeholder values, and creating truly inclusive environments.

Best-practice examples include Visit Lauderdale's "Everyone Under the Sun" campaign supporting LGBTQ+ and Black-owned businesses; Visit Cayuga's storytelling on Harriet Tubman and heritage; and Osaka Tourism Bureau's LGBTQ+ travel portal. These efforts show that inclusive tourism goes beyond marketing, requiring intentional investment, celebration of diverse stories, and removing barriers for underrepresented groups.

Tempe Tourism's own efforts, including the completion of the Social Impact Assessment, position the city to lead in this space—aligning internal values with outward-facing action that strengthens its identity as a destination where all are welcome.



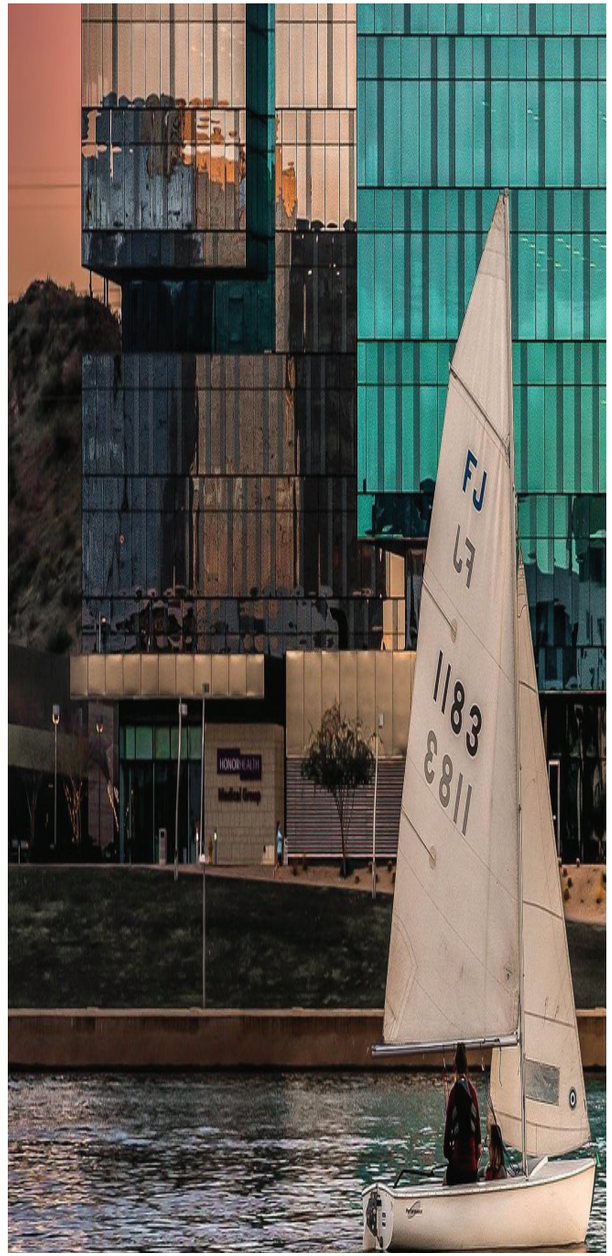
C. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

Tempe Tourism (“Tempe Tourism Office” or “TTO”) is staffed by a 12-person team organized into three main departments: Marketing, Communications, and Sales, each led by a department head reporting directly to the President & CEO. The Administration department, comprising the President & CEO and the Finance and Operations Manager, oversees financial management and organizational direction. President & CEO also serves as the primary external representative and reports to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors.

Compared to peer destination marketing organizations (DMO) of similar size and scope, Tempe Tourism’s organizational structure is streamlined. While Tempe Tourism operates with three core departments, many comparable DMOs have expanded beyond this and include specialized departments such as Sports or Sports Commissions, dedicated Visitor/Conference Services units, Destination Stewardship or Partner Development teams, Research & Business Intelligence functions, IT/Business Systems departments, and Community/Advocacy units.

The Tempe Tourism Board is comprised of up to 21 members representing a cross-section of Tempe’s hospitality and business sectors, as well as representatives from the City of Tempe and ASU. The size and composition of Tempe Tourism’s board allow for incorporating diverse voices from lodging, attractions, city government, university leadership, and economic development sectors. The Board sets the organization’s vision, approves the budget, and holds the chief executive accountable for the execution of the annual business plan. Tempe Tourism’s board structure and size align well with industry standards.

The Tempe Tourism Office operates with a diversified funding model. The primary sources include the City of Tempe Bed Tax, which is governed by a six-year contract and features annual increases based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), and Prop 302 funds, which are distributed through the Maricopa County Bed Tax and allocated for marketing purposes. In FY 2024-2025, Tempe Tourism’s total budget was just over $4 million, with approximately 77 % from the City Bed Tax and 22% from Prop 302. Additional revenue is generated through private fundraising—such as advertising sales in TTO’s owned media, an annual luncheon, and event hosting—as well as interest income and in-kind contributions. While this mix provides some stability, the potential expiration of Prop 302 funding in 2030 presents a significant risk.



D. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

As part of the planning process, a series of semi-structured focus groups with stakeholders across business, lodging, attractions, arts and culture, and city leadership were facilitated to inform the strategy. Discussions were designed to surface insights into the destination's strengths, challenges, and future opportunities.

Tempe Tourism's stakeholders expressed strong pride in the city's distinct identity including its welcoming independent spirit and commitment to cultural diversity and artistic charm. Local entrepreneurs highlighted the importance of preserving and promoting the city's authenticity, particularly through support for small, minority-owned businesses and storytelling that centers Tempe's personality, its people, and connection to both a nostalgic past and bright innovative future.

There is an appetite for hyper-local marketing efforts, including themed dining trails and neighborhood-focused campaigns—distinguishing Tempe from neighboring Metro Phoenix cities. Stakeholders' have a shared desire to see Tempe Tourism expand its role as a connector—helping coordinate seasonal promotions, cross-market businesses, and lower existing barriers to participation in citywide initiatives.

Stakeholders acknowledged the strong engagement with Tempe Tourism, alongside opportunities to strengthen cross-industry communication and partnership across industries. All voiced resounding interest in more collaborative branding efforts, packaged itineraries, and shared planning tools. Hoteliers noted the need for cohesive messaging and professional meeting space to attract group travel, while arts and culture stakeholders emphasized the potential of co-created content and bundled ticketing to elevate the city's creative identity. Attractions leaders advocated for unified visitor experiences that distribute traffic beyond downtown and requested more direct access to promotional support.

Participants urged Tempe Tourism to embrace its identity as not just a marketing agency, but as a destination development partner—advocating for infrastructure and tourism product development, amplifying underrepresented voices, and creating experiences that reflect the full depth and character of Tempe.

KEY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT THEMES

Several key themes emerged across stakeholder groups, revealing a shared vision for Tempe as a vibrant, inclusive—if a little proudly quirky—destination. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of preserving the city's local character, defined by its textured small businesses, cultural expression, and creative vitality. Participants expressed shared recognition of the urgency to nurture Tempe's uniqueness against the pressures of rising rents, accelerating development, and the creeping sameness of surrounding urban growth. Stakeholders called for vibrant, place-based storytelling, intentional investment in arts and infrastructure, and inclusive marketing that reflects the full depth and diversity of the Tempe community.

Stakeholders candidly shared challenges facing Tempe's tourism landscape, including affordability, transportation, dense lodging landscape, limited access to funding, and a growing overreliance on large-scale events that can strain infrastructure and eclipse smaller, independent operators. Many voiced concern that without more coordinated support, Tempe risks losing the very creative voices and businesses that give the city its distinct character. Simultaneously, there was strong support for Tempe Tourism to be a leader in the community partnership through enhancing cross-promotion, easing barriers for small and minority-owned businesses, and reframing the city's story to showcase its multifaceted character beyond the university lens.

DESTINATION STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESULTS

In addition to the focus groups, the stakeholder engagement to support the creation of the strategy included an online survey for destination stakeholders. The Destination Stakeholder Survey served as a critical component of the plan's stakeholder engagement process, allowing for a broader range of participation from businesses and organizations. The survey provided insights from local business owners, hospitality leaders, cultural organizations, and community partners.

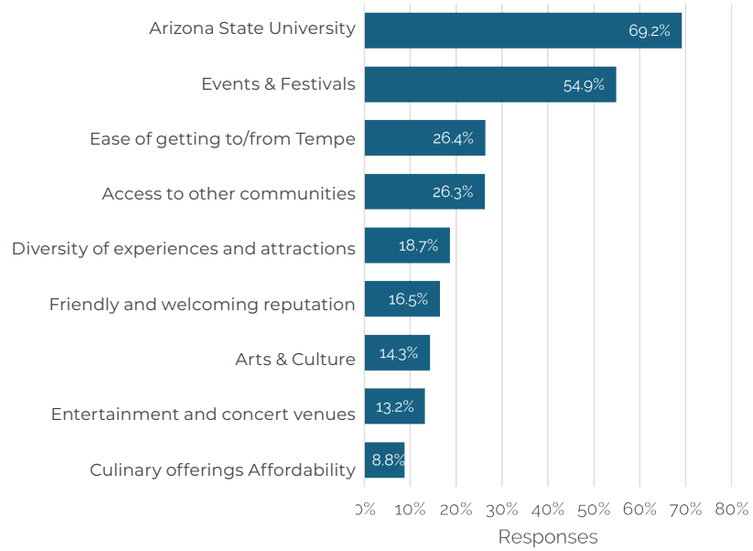
The Destination Stakeholder Survey revealed a nuanced and constructive perspective on Tempe's current tourism landscape, highlighting both its distinctive strengths and ongoing challenges. Respondents consistently cited Arizona State University, events and festivals, and the city's accessibility as top draws for visitors. The culinary scene, arts and culture, and Tempe's welcoming reputation also emerged as important assets, with several stakeholders emphasizing the need to further leverage unique, local businesses to differentiate Tempe from neighboring communities.

At the same time, stakeholders expressed concerns about competitive pressures from surrounding cities, perceptions of limited amenities or attractions, and the prevalence of chain businesses over independent establishments—particularly in downtown areas.

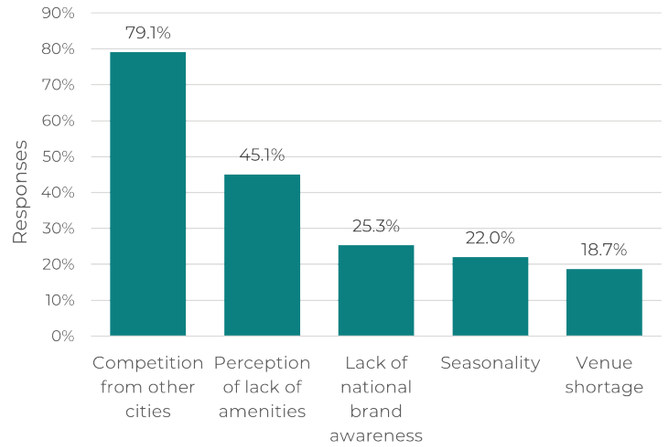
The lack of dedicated venues for meetings and sports, seasonal weather shifts, and rising business costs were frequently identified as barriers to attracting more overnight visitors and maintaining strong occupancy rates. Many respondents called for continued support of local events, festivals, and cultural activities, as well as enhancements to hospitality infrastructure and a shared vision for tourism that benefits both residents and visitors.

Overall, survey participants affirmed the positive impact of tourism on Tempe's quality of life and economic vitality, with many considering tourism programs—especially those promoting events, meetings, and need-period occupancy—as critical to their success. There was strong support for efforts that enhance the visitor experience, foster collaboration among hospitality partners, and sustain Tempe's marketing and promotional activities. These insights underscore the importance of aligning strategic initiatives with stakeholder priorities, ensuring that Tempe's tourism growth remains inclusive, community-driven, and responsive to local needs

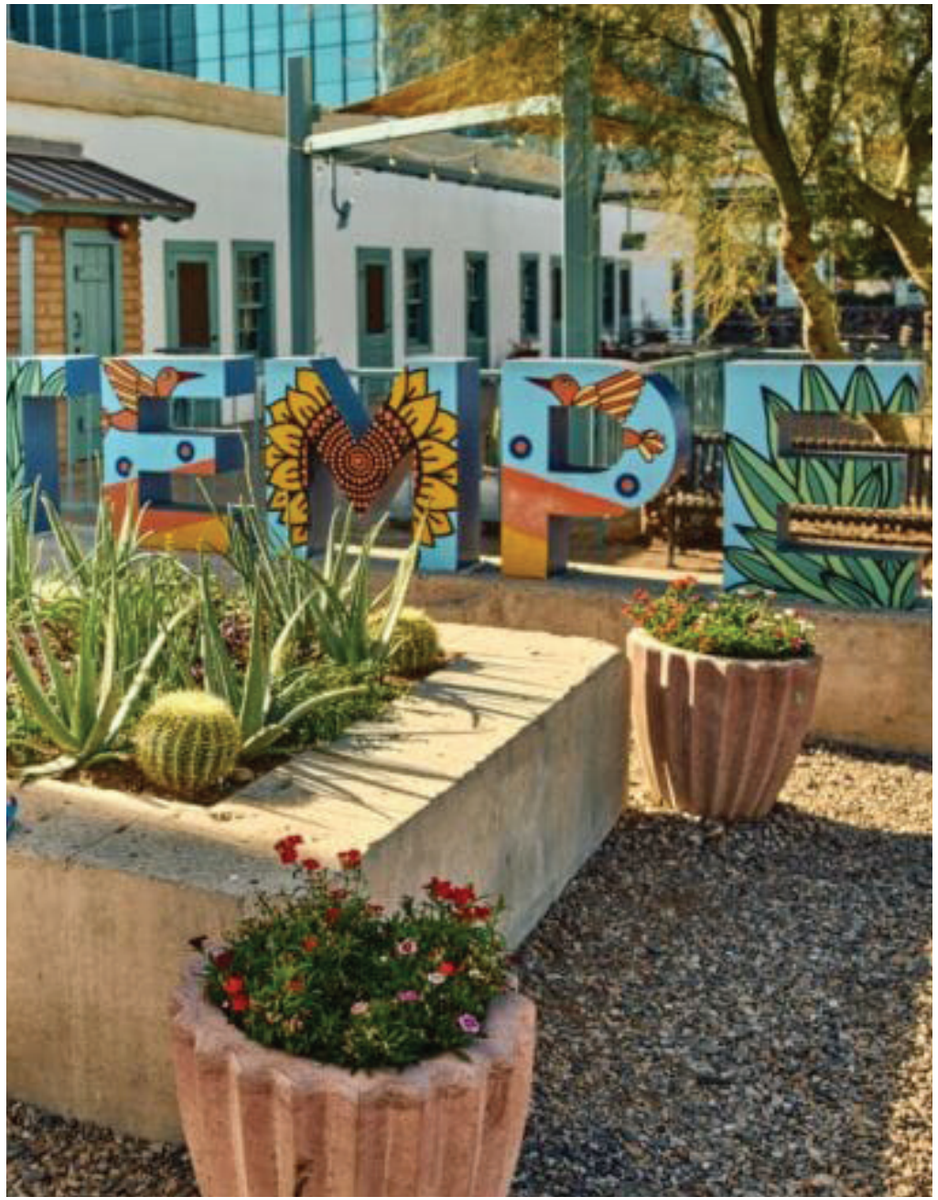
TEMPE'S STRENGTH AS A DESTINATION



CHALLENGES TO ATTRACTING MORE OVERNIGHT VISITORS



Source: Destination Stakeholder Survey Results



STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

Drawing from best practices in destination management and strategic planning, Tempe's strategic framework is built upon an integrated approach that balances economic growth with community stewardship. The framework recognizes that modern destination management organizations must evolve beyond traditional marketing to embrace broader roles in long-term placemaking and economic development.

Tempe Ignited's strategic framework consists of five interconnected imperatives that work synergistically to advance Tempe's position as a progressive, inclusive, and sustainable destination. Unlike traditional linear planning approaches, this framework acknowledges the complex, dynamic relationships between brand development, visitor experience, community engagement, and operational excellence and resiliency.

1. **Build Upon Elevated Brand by Targeting "Owned" Niches** - Grow visitation and spending from varied higher-spend travelers by aligning with audiences who seek destinations that reflect their interests and values—while increasing national recognition for Tempe's innovative, elevated and inclusive identity
2. **Connect Destination and Increase Visitor Readiness** - Enhance cross-promotion, collaboration, and visitor journey experience
3. **Reposition Tempe Tourism's Value to the Community** - Position Tempe Tourism as an essential resource for local tourism and hospitality businesses by providing actionable market intelligence and promotional support, thereby increasing community awareness of tourism's contribution to Tempe's economy and quality of place.
4. **Share and Extend Operational Excellence** - Enhance internal processes and expand technical assistance capabilities
5. **Develop Strategic Funding Roadmap** - Diversify funding streams and build operational continuity

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

The following strategies outline a phased approach to achieving Tempe Tourism's vision through three interconnected phases: Immediate Wins (0–12 months), Foundation Builders (12–36 months), and Transformative Initiatives (36–60 months). This structure aims to balance momentum with feasible implementation, maximizing impact while aligning with the organization's available capacity and resources.

- **Immediate Wins (0-12 Months)** Low-resource, high-impact actions that build momentum
- **Foundation Builders (12-36 Months)** Moderate-resource initiatives requiring cross-functional coordination
- **Transformative Initiatives (36-60 Months)** High-investment, systemic shifts requiring policy/sector alignment



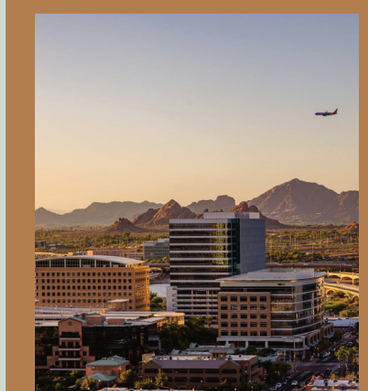
BUILD UPON ELEVATED BRAND BY TARGETING "OWNED" NICHES



CONNECT DESTINATION AND INCREASE VISITOR READINESS



REPOSITION TEMPE TOURISM'S VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

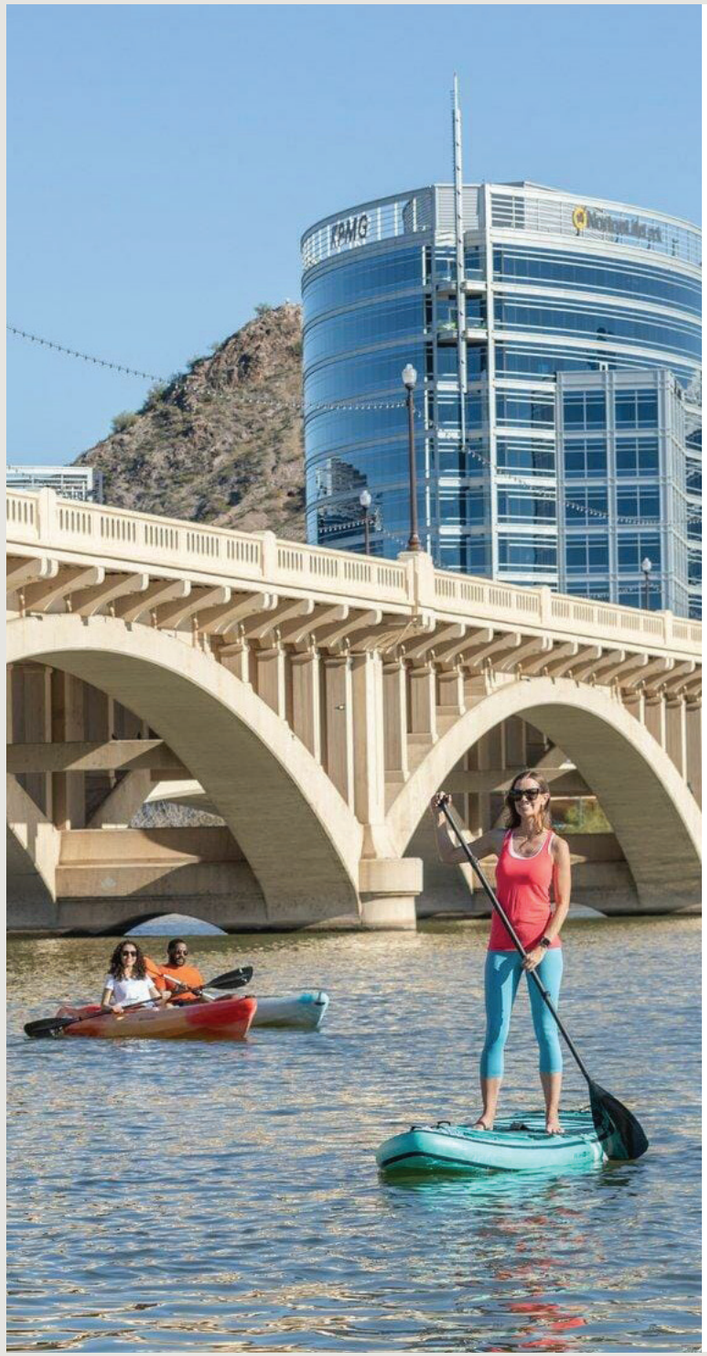


SHARE AND EXTEND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE



DEVELOP STRATEGIC FUNDING ROADMAP

By advancing these imperatives with detailed strategies, clear rationales, and proven tactics from leading destinations, Tempe Tourism will be well-positioned to sustain its momentum, deliver on its promise of inclusive and innovative destination development, and ensure that the benefits of tourism are shared by all.



IMPERATIVE 1: BUILD UPON ELEVATED BRAND BY TARGETING "OWNED" NICHES

Tempe's brand identity as a destination is rooted in its authentic leadership in diversity and inclusion, environmental sustainability, innovation, and the location for the main ASU campus, which is recognized as a Research I University. Over the past decade, Tempe has evolved into a compact urban oasis, blending university energy with a thriving corporate sector, creative community, and a nationally recognized commitment to sustainability. These "owned niches"—from inclusive events and accessible experiences to green infrastructure and a vibrant arts scene—are not only true to Tempe's story but also align with current travel trends that prioritize meaningful, values-driven experiences. By leaning into these strengths, Tempe can distinguish itself from competitors and position itself as a destination of choice for visitors who seek more than just a place to stay—they seek a place to belong.

In today's competitive tourism landscape, destinations that clearly articulate and deliver on their unique value propositions are the ones that capture attention and loyalty. The growing demand for inclusive, sustainable, and culturally rich travel experiences means that Tempe's authentic assets are more relevant than ever. Emphasizing these differentiators in all aspects of branding and marketing not only helps attract high-value visitors but also fosters deeper community pride and economic resilience.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Increased market share among travelers who prioritize diversity, sustainability, and authentic urban experiences.
- Enhanced national reputation for Tempe as a progressive, innovative, and welcoming destination.
- Stronger engagement and loyalty from meeting planners, group contacts, and leisure visitors aligned with Tempe's values.
- Growth in summer and off-peak visitation, supporting year-round business for local hotels and attractions.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR IMPERATIVE 1

1.1 AUGMENT DIGITAL PLATFORMS WITH STORYTELLING AND TARGETED CONTENT

WHY IT MATTERS:

Digital innovation combined with authentic storytelling is a proven driver of visitor engagement and brand differentiation. Destinations that showcase real voices and local culture create lasting impressions and inspire travel decisions.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Continue to build out the new website from a consumer perspective and develop "Spirit of Tempe" content to curate stories from local entrepreneurs, artists, and change makers.
- Develop thematic itineraries (e.g., "Innovation & Academia," "Diversity in the Desert," "Sustainable Tempe") for the website and social media.



Foundation Builders

- Craft and feature diverse, values-aligned influencers (e.g., BIPOC, LGBTQ+, sustainability advocates) in campaigns.

1.2 ENGAGE NICHE MEDIA AND VALUE-ALIGNED AUDIENCES

WHY IT MATTERS:

Targeted outreach to communities that share Tempe's values—such as sustainability, innovation, and inclusion—builds brand loyalty and attracts visitors more likely to become ambassadors for the destination.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Contract micro-influencers who feature niche areas of focus that may include health, wellness, accessibility, and other priorities important to Tempe.
- Participate in national campaigns or awards that recognize inclusive and sustainable destinations.

Foundation Builders

- Expand earned media efforts and pitch stories to national media outlets focused on DEI, sustainability, and university innovation.

1. 3 DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT AND LOYALTY WITH MEETING PLANNERS ALIGNED TO TEMPE

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Empowering the sales team to cultivate deeper, long-term relationships with meeting planners—especially those with ASU ties or an affinity for Tempe's unique brand—will deliver personalized, value-added experiences, and builds a sense of community that drives repeat business and advocacy.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Recognize and celebrate ASU alumni planners through spotlights in newsletters, LinkedIn features, or at annual appreciation events, reinforcing their value to Tempe's visitor economy.
- Using contacts developed while participating in Team Arizona events, create a list of potential sports conference targets (e.g., Amateur sports governing bodies, regional collegiate athletic conferences, national governing body regional meetings)

Foundation Builders

- Formalize the ASU Alumni Meeting Planner Network by curating/updating a database of meeting planners who are ASU alumni or have a strong ASU/Tempe connection, ensuring regular updates to contact information and preferences.
- Create messaging and meeting packages that highlight the benefits of meeting in Tempe and, as applicable, incorporate local sports experiences and ASU campus tours

1. 4 BOLSTER SUMMER TRAVEL BY BOLDLY DIFFERENTIATING TEMPE MARKETING TACTICS FROM OTHER SOUTHWESTERN DESTINATIONS

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Seasonality remains a challenge for Tempe, with summer and off-peak periods presenting opportunities to grow market share. By packaging and promoting Tempe's distinctive experiences—especially those that appeal to travelers seeking urban vibrancy, local culture, and accessible recreation—the city can increase overnight stays, support local businesses, and position itself as a compelling alternative to other regional destinations. Successful summer campaigns in peer cities have demonstrated that creative bundling, targeted digital outreach, and strong local partnerships can significantly boost visitation and hotel performance during need periods

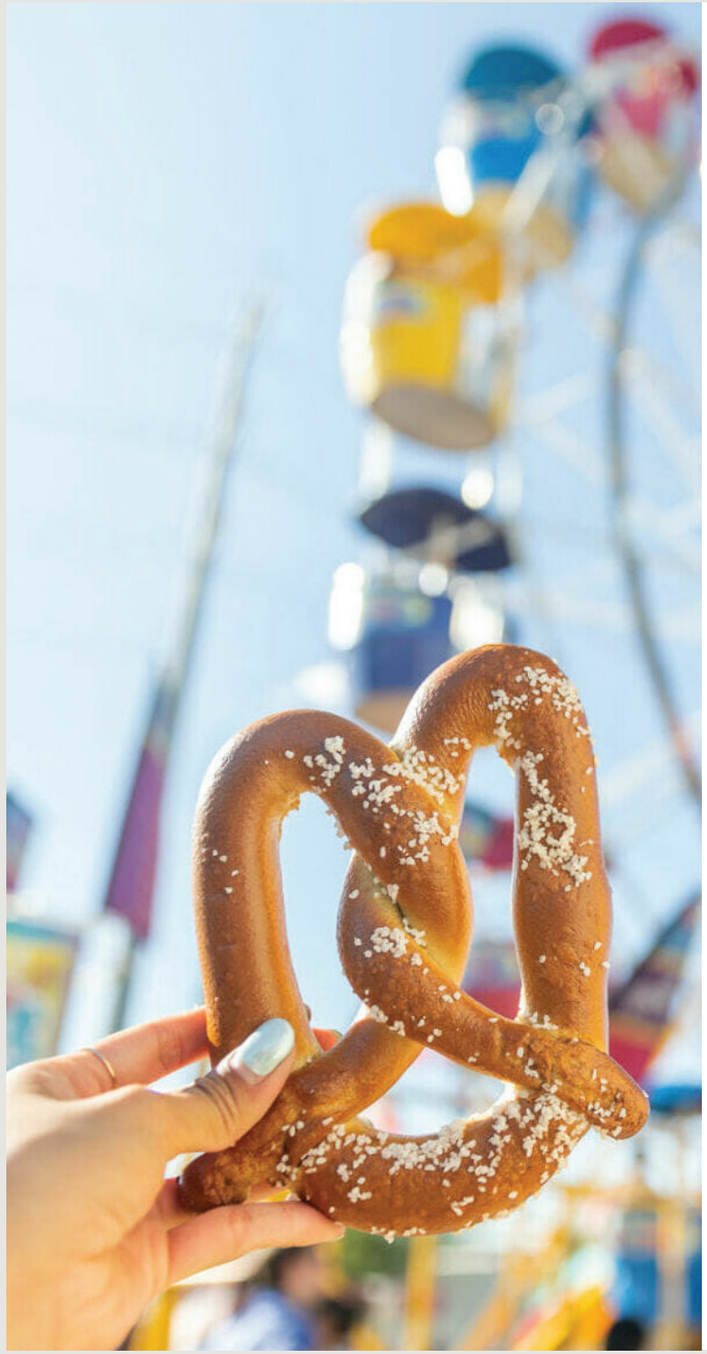
TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Build on the current summer campaign to encourage broader partner participation opportunities to encourage investments in summer promotional programming

Foundation Builders

- Select key feeder drive markets with similar summer climates and a propensity to want to escape for summer trips
- Develop a unique brand position that fully differentiates Tempe from other Southwest destinations



IMPERATIVE 2: CONNECT THE DESTINATION AND INCREASE VISITOR READINESS

Tempe's visitor experience is defined by the seamless integration of its diverse assets—downtown vibrancy, outdoor recreation, arts, culture, and a dynamic culinary scene. However, many visitors only scratch the surface, missing out on the full breadth of what the city has to offer. By strengthening connections between attractions, supporting local businesses in becoming more visitor-ready, and leveraging technology to guide and inform guests, Tempe can maximize the economic and social impact of each visit. Enhanced collaboration and data-driven insights empower local visitor-facing and hospitality businesses, foster positive word-of-mouth, and position Tempe as a welcoming, easy-to-navigate base for exploring the region.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Increased cross-promotion and collaboration among Tempe's attractions and hospitality businesses.
- Improved visitor satisfaction and longer stays due to seamless, curated experiences.
- Greater dispersion of visitors throughout Tempe, supporting businesses citywide and reducing pressure on core areas.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR IMPERATIVE 2

2.1 LAUNCH A TEMPE PARTNER COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

WHY IT MATTERS:

Bundled experiences encourage visitors to explore more neighborhoods, supporting local businesses and lengthening stays.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Foundation Builders

- Develop programs such as a mobile pass or digital itinerary or wayfinding map that bundles local restaurants, attractions, and transport.
- Encourage partners to offer rewards for visiting multiple times or completing themed itineraries.
- Promote the program through hotels, visitor centers, and digital channels.

Example: Louisville's "Culture Pass" and similar programs have shown measurable increases in partner engagement and redemptions.

2.2 INVEST IN VISITOR INTELLIGENCE AND DATA SHARING

WHY IT MATTERS:

Real-time data on visitor movements and preferences enables more effective marketing, operational improvements, and resource allocation. Sharing insights with partners builds trust and collective capacity.

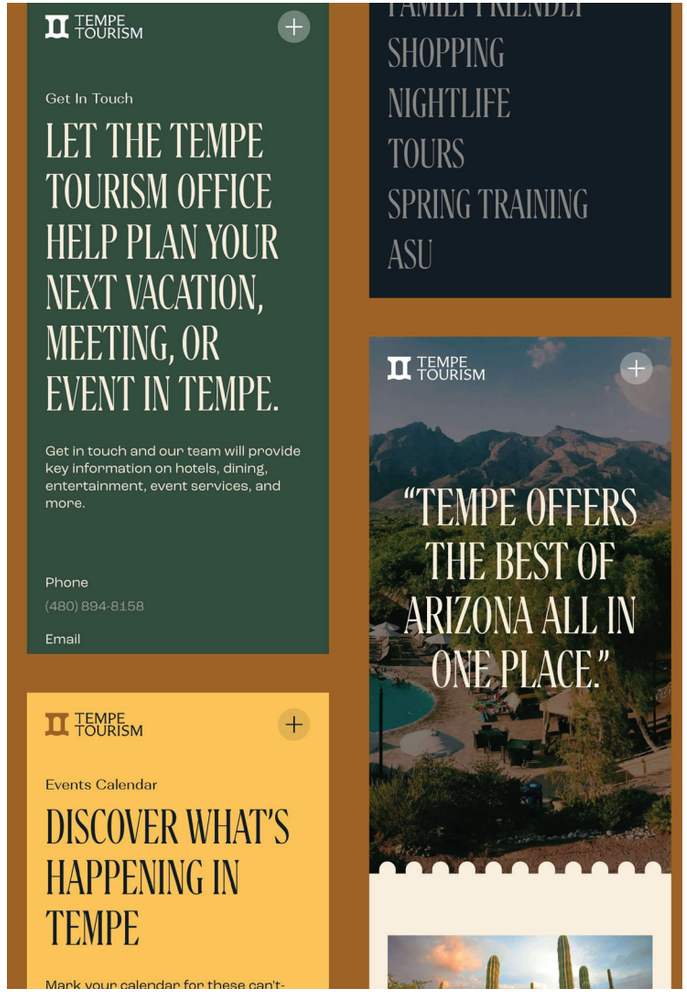
TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Win

- Invest in geolocation and spend tracking platforms to monitor visitor journeys.

Foundation Builder

- Share quarterly dashboards with partners to inform joint promotions and experience design.
- Use data to identify and address pinch points or under-visited areas.



2.3 CREATE A HOSPITALITY READINESS LAB

WHY IT MATTERS:

Ongoing training and technical support are essential to ensuring that all businesses within Tempe's tourism ecosystem are equipped to deliver excellent, accessible, and welcoming service. Tempe Tourism already distributes valuable information, resources, and tools to its destination partners, helping them stay informed and improve their offerings. However, the Hospitality Readiness Lab will elevate these efforts by creating a more intentional and consistent training cadence, providing partners with timely, relevant, and actionable content tailored to their needs.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Augment the current toolkits and portfolio of technical assistance offered to hospitality businesses.
- Host regularly scheduled workshops on accessibility, digital marketing, and customer service.

Foundation Builders

- Continue to encourage ongoing learning and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing among hospitality partners through regular (semi-annual) training to encourage consistency of visitor-facing services across Tempe.
- Recognize and reward businesses that achieve visitor readiness benchmarks.

Example: Meet Boston's "All-In Boston" and Tourism Cares' stewardship training are recent models.

2.4 PROMOTE THE OPPORTUNITIES BEING OFFERED AT TEMPE TOWN LAKE

WHY IT MATTERS

Highlighting Tempe Town Lake, the area's most prominent body of water, brings one of the area's unique assets to life as a source of community pride and a visitor appeal.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Review Tempe Tourism marketing materials to understand how Tempe Town Lake has been positioned in the past
- Provide the City and other partners with examples of how other destinations have activated water-based assets

Foundation Builders

- Develop a Tempe Town Lake action plan in collaboration with the City and its concessionaires to explore promotional opportunities and developments that will be a draw for both residents and visitors



IMPERATIVE 3: REPOSITION TEMPE TOURISM'S VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

Tourism is a cornerstone of Tempe's economy, supporting thousands of jobs and generating vital tax revenue. Yet, the broader contributions of tourism—to placemaking, cultural vibrancy, and community well-being—are often underappreciated. By repositioning Tempe Tourism as an essential partner in community development, the organization can build stronger support, foster new partnerships, and ensure that the benefits of tourism are widely understood and shared.

Demonstrating the tangible value of tourism to residents, businesses, and city leaders is critical for sustaining investment and support. Transparent reporting, community engagement, and alignment with local priorities strengthen trust and ensure that tourism growth enhances quality of place for all.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Increased community awareness and support for tourism's economic, social, and placemaking benefits.
- Stronger alignment between Tempe Tourism's investments and community priorities.
- Enhanced collaboration with local partners, leading to more effective and sustainable tourism initiatives.

3.1 ANNUAL "TOURISM FOR TEMPE" IMPACT REPORT & DASHBOARD

WHY IT MATTERS:

Transparent, data-driven reporting builds credibility and demonstrates the return on investment from tourism.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Augment the next annual report format to focus on impact in addition to results
- Visualize jobs, taxes, and social-impact metrics in an accessible format.

Foundation Builder

- Distribute reports citywide and present findings at public forums.
- Use dashboard data to inform future investments and strategies.

Examples: Visit Raleigh and Visit Savannah have set industry standards with their annual impact reports.

3.2 TRANSPARENT EVENT-SUPPORT RUBRIC

WHY IT MATTERS:

A clear, equitable process for funding mega-events ensures that investments align with strategic goals and maximize community benefit.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

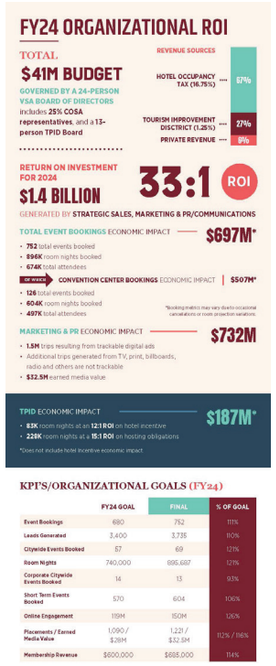
- Develop criteria that score events on economic impact, seasonality/filling need periods, and other community and DEI outcomes.
- Use updated rubric when seeking Board approval or input for whether and to what degree to support signature or "mega" events

Foundation Builders

- Regularly review and refine the rubric based on feedback and results.
- Publicly share funding decisions on signature event support and outcomes (including the return-on-investment for the city because of the event).

Example: San Antonio's ROI-driven event strategy uses a quantifiable metrics framework to measure returns from Visit San Antonio's support for meetings and events. This approach combines direct economic impact tracking with strategic reporting to optimize resource allocation and demonstrate value to stakeholders.





3.3 INCENTIVIZE YOUTH SPORTS ORGANIZERS TO USE TEMPE FACILITIES

WHY IT MATTERS:

Youth sports tourism is a multibillion-dollar industry that brings significant economic benefits to host communities, including increased hotel stays, restaurant visits, and retail spending. While Tempe may not have the scale of purpose-built sports complexes found in other cities, it can still compete by reducing barriers for event organizers and providing a seamless, value-added experience for teams and their families. Strategic incentives not only help fill need periods for local hotels but also build Tempe's reputation as a supportive, easy-to-work-with destination for youth sports events.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Explore the potential for discounted facility rental fees for qualifying youth events, making Tempe's venues more cost-competitive at city and ASU-managed facilities.
- More dedicated resources to the sports liaison from Tempe Tourism to assist organizers with logistics, permitting, and connections to local vendors, mirroring the "one-stop-shop" approach used by successful sports commissions.

Foundation Builder

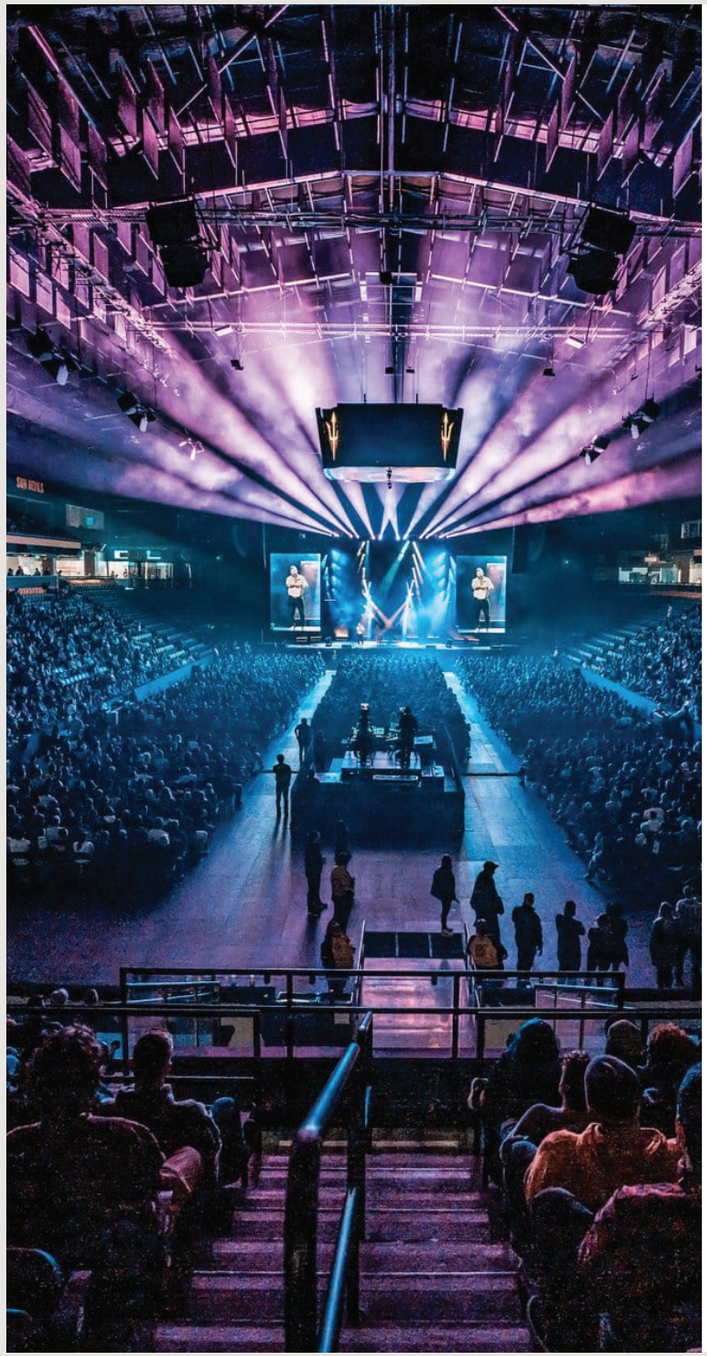
- Build an incentive package/program for youth sports organizers who choose Tempe facilities and block rooms at Tempe hotels. Incentives could include complimentary or discounted shuttle service between hotels, sports venues, and Tempe attractions and/or marketing support or other visitor services support.

Examples:

- Delaware's TEAMS Program provides direct grants to sports event operators to attract and retain tournaments, resulting in nearly $258 million in visitor spending in 2023.
- Durham (NC) Sports Commission offers grants of thousands of dollars annually to local events of all sizes, supporting youth participation and event growth.
- Louisville and Tucson have successfully partnered with local transit agencies to offer discounted or free shuttles for event participants, reducing parking and access barriers.







IMPERATIVE 4: SHARE AND EXTEND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Operational excellence is the backbone of Tempe Tourism's effectiveness and reputation. As the organization's role expands to include destination stewardship, data sharing, and community partnership, investing in best practices, staff development, and modern systems becomes essential. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration, Tempe Tourism can maximize its impact and serve as a model for other place-making entities in the city.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Improved staff efficiency, satisfaction, and retention.
- Greater use of tourism data by stakeholders to inform placemaking and investment decisions.
- Enhanced visibility and influence for Tempe Tourism within the industry and community.
- Efficient communication and collaboration are integrated within the programs and organizational structure of Tempe Tourism.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR IMPERATIVE 4

4.1 CREATE A "DESTINATION DATA COMMONS" FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS (EXTERNAL)

WHY IT MATTERS:

An open-access data portal will empower partners and city planners to make informed decisions on business decisions and ongoing placemaking based on how visitors experience Tempe and Tempe Tourism's knowledge of nurturing a destination that people want to visit and work in.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Further encourage city planning and development efforts to use/access visitor behavior and impact data

Foundation Builders

- Develop a centralized portal for tourism data and insights for destination partners.
- Provide training and support for partners to use the data effectively.

Example: VisitRaleigh launched a comprehensive Destination Data & Technology initiative to enhance visitor engagement, support local businesses, and drive tourism growth.

4.2 CONTINUE BUILDING A MATRIXED OPERATING MODEL & PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLATFORM (INTERNAL)

WHY IT MATTERS:

Cross-functional teams and modern project management tools break down silos and increase organizational agility.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Implement a project management system to track progress and accountability.
- Organize staff into cross-cutting projects (Brand, Experience, Data, Partnerships).

Foundation Builder

- Regularly review and adjust team structures based on strategic priorities.

4.3 CREATE A CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER (COO) POSITION (INTERNAL)

WHY THIS MATTERS:

As Tempe Tourism's responsibilities expand, the organization will benefit greatly from dedicated leadership for cross-departmental coordination and operational efficiency. While department heads excel in managing their core programs (e.g., marketing, sales, communications), the COO would serve as the "air traffic controller" for matrixed projects, ensuring alignment with strategic goals and reducing administrative bottlenecks. The COO position would also free the CEO to focus on the organization's and destination's long-term competitiveness and vitality, as well as devote more concentrated attention to partnerships with the city, DTA, and ASU to ensure that competitiveness.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- In the context of the above move towards a more matrixed implementation approach, define the COO role
- Establish protocols for how the COO will interact/report to the CEO and the responsibilities the COO will have for the remaining staff (e.g., relationship with Department heads)

Foundation Builders

- Develop a position description with clear success metrics and KPIs, including targets for operational efficiency improvements and interdepartmental coordination achievements
- Form a search committee to identify and secure the new hire

4.4 PRIORITIZE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH & ACCREDITATION

WHY IT MATTERS:

Investing in staff development and pursuing industry accreditation (e.g., DMAP, GSTC) ensures that Tempe Tourism remains at the forefront of best practices and begins to build a succession plan for leadership positions.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Win

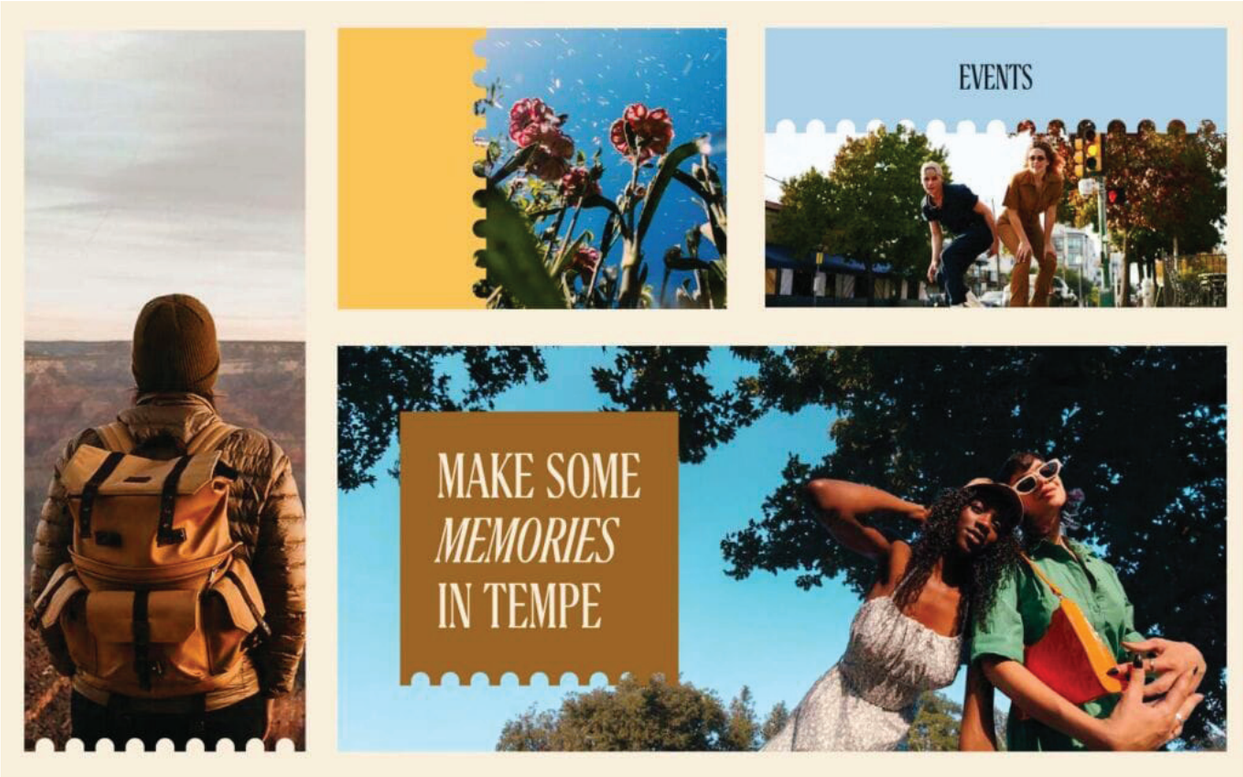
- Create individualized professional development plans to support augmented responsibilities.

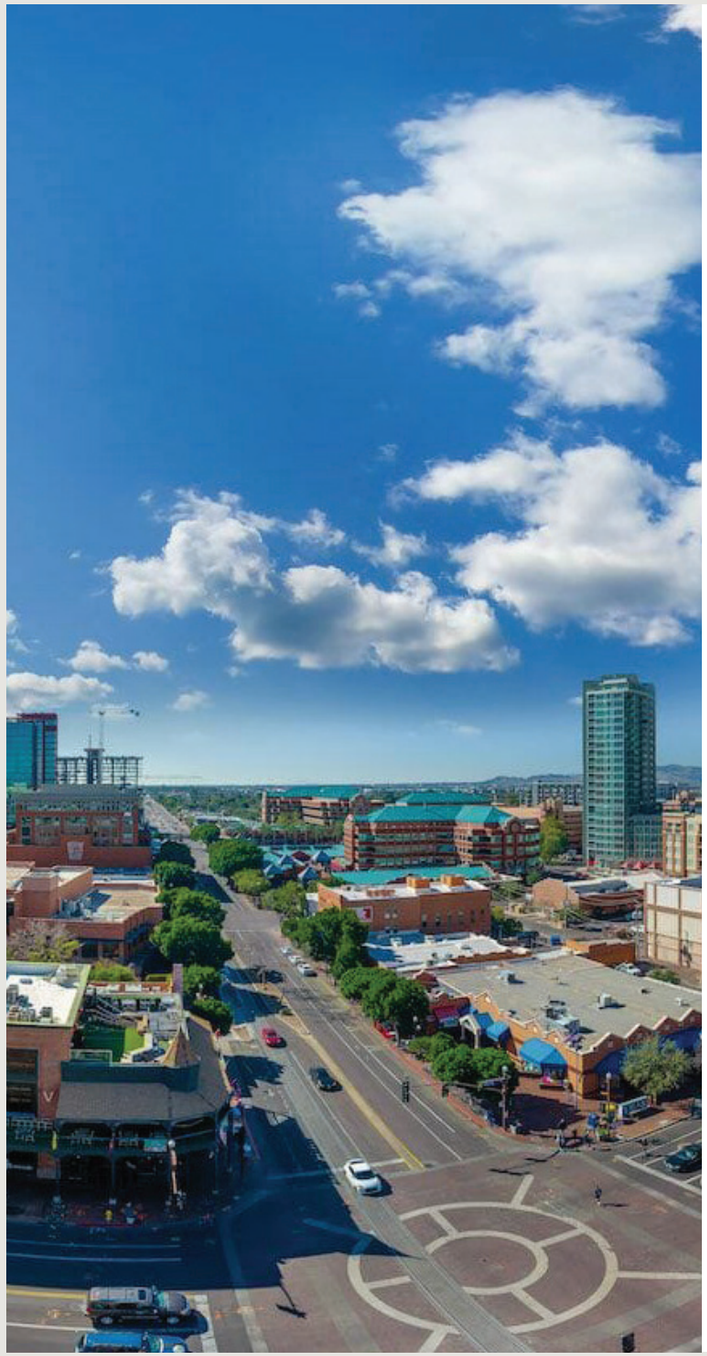
Foundation Builder

- Pursue DMAP accreditation and industry certifications.

Transformative Initiatives

- Create University and Community Relations position to nurture relationships across multiple academic and athletic departments (either an additional FTE or by expanding the responsibilities of existing staff)





IMPERATIVE 5: DEVELOP A STRATEGIC FUNDING ROADMAP

Financial resilience is the foundation for Tempe Tourism's ability to deliver on its expanded mission. With the sunset of Prop 302 on the horizon and increasing competition for visitor dollars, the organization must proactively diversify its funding streams, build reserves, and advocate for stable, predictable support from the city. A strategic funding roadmap will ensure that Tempe Tourism can continue to activate its program, maintain operational excellence, and deliver community value, regardless of external funding conditions.

Without a resilient funding strategy, even the best-laid plans can falter. By planning ahead, building reserves, and securing a dedicated share of bed tax revenue, Tempe Tourism can avoid disruptive budget gaps and maintain momentum through market shifts.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Maintenance and enhancement of core program funding and operational capacity.
- financial reserves and diversified revenue streams.
- Continued recognition of Tempe Tourism's value to the community.
- Successful transition to a sustainable funding model post-Prop 302.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR IMPERATIVE 5

5.1 24-MONTH OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE TASK FORCE

WHY IT MATTERS:

A dedicated board-led group can model scenarios, set targets, and drive the transition to a new funding structure—ensuring that Tempe Tourism is not only financially prepared for future changes, but also organizationally resilient. By proactively planning for funding shifts and engaging leadership in scenario analysis and strategic decision-making, the organization builds the capacity to adapt to external challenges, safeguard core programs, and sustain its mission through periods of uncertainty. This approach strengthens Tempe Tourism's ability to remain agile, effective, and forward-looking, regardless of fluctuations in revenue streams or market conditions.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Charge the task force with assisting the CEO in projecting future resource needs to remain competitive in inspiring visitation to Tempe
- Charge the task force with identifying future funding gaps.

Foundation Builders

- Based on the above, recommend phased increases in city bed tax allocation/explore a new approach to determining Tempe Tourism's contract with the city.

5.2 DEVELOP A RESERVE & RISK-MITIGATION POLICY

WHY IT MATTERS:

Building and maintaining a financial reserve provides a buffer against unexpected shocks and ensures program continuity.

TACTICS & BEST PRACTICES:

Immediate Wins

- Set a policy for a three-month operating reserve.
- Communicate the importance of reserves to stakeholders.

Foundation Builder

- Based on the above and the task force's findings, conduct annual scenario planning and stress tests.

5.3 CRAFT A LONG-TERM FUNDING MODEL

WHY IT MATTERS:

Tempe's reliance on cyclical bed-tax revenue and potentially expiring Prop 302 funds creates vulnerability. A long-term funding strategy ensures proactive, data-informed decision-making aligned with long-term destination priorities.

Immediate Win

- Through the above task force, begin socializing the need for more long-term thinking about the organization's financial stability

Foundation Builders

- Based on the above needs assessment and risk-mitigation approach, determine the annual (growing) resource needs for Tempe Tourism's destination promotion and management program
- Examine peer DMO funding mixes and best practices
- Share findings with the City of Tempe and explore changes to the current contract stipulations

Transformative Initiatives

- Develop a Funding Strategy and revenue models for Tempe Tourism in 2030 onward



IMPLEMENTATION | NEXT STEPS

Tempe Ignited represents an evolution in the organization's approach to destination management, requiring strong partnerships and sustained commitment from all stakeholders. Success will depend on Tempe Tourism's ability to lead this transformation while maintaining the collaborative spirit that has made the city a model for inclusive tourism development.

Implementation success will require three essential elements: consistent leadership commitment from Tempe Tourism's Board and staff, active engagement from community partners and stakeholders, and ongoing financial investment in both human capital and program development.

The future of Tempe is bright and balanced with a foundation of shared pride. ***Tempe Ignited*** must remain a living document, regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changing conditions and emerging opportunities. Most importantly, all implementation efforts must stay true to Tempe's core values of inclusivity, innovation, and sustainability—ensuring that tourism growth continues to enhance rather than diminish the authentic character that makes Tempe a special place to live, work, and visit.

Tempe Ignited provides the blueprint, but success will ultimately depend on the collective commitment of everyone who shares a stake in Tempe's future as a destination. Through thoughtful implementation and sustained collaboration, Tempe can continue to serve as a model for how tourism can be a force for positive community development and shared prosperity.



TEMPE TOURISM



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