

# VISIT MISSISSIPPI



Strategic Plan  
2025-2030

VISIT MISSISSIPPI



ISHAM

COMPOSER  
PRODUCER  
SONGWRITER  
CRITIC  
AGENT  
PROMOTER  
DJ  
AUDIO  
ENGINEER

QUILTER  
JEWELER

QUILTER  
JEWELER  
METALSMITH  
BEADER  
PUPPET  
BASKET  
MAKER  
WOODWORKER  
STORYTELLER  
WEAVER  
CHEF

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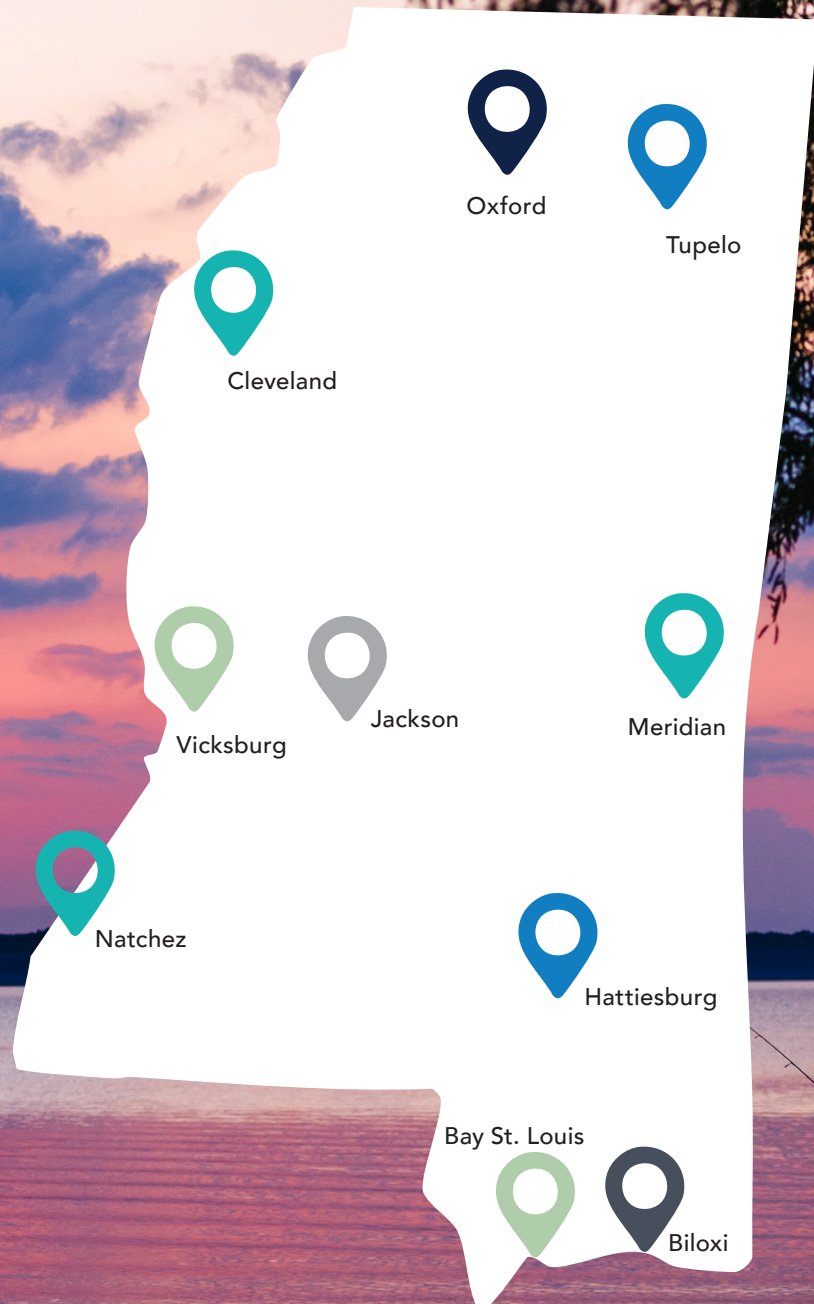
# Introduction and Methodology

**Mississippi, the "Birthplace of America's Music",** is home to some of the most impactful cultural experiences in the country. It offers a visitor experience like no other. Visit Mississippi, the state's official tourism agency, plays a vital role in attracting visitors, shaping the state's global image, and growing the economic impact of tourism in the state.

To guide its work over the next three years, Visit Mississippi engaged Coraggio Group, a strategic consultancy with deep tourism experience, to help understand the current realities across the state and larger tourism industry, build an informed strategy, and begin to activate that strategy across the organization. These distinct phases were referred to as Get Clear, Get Focused, and Get Moving. The Get Clear phase, which was designed to ensure the Strategic Plan reflected the needs and vision of the state and its stakeholders, began with three research evaluations and stakeholder engagement.

# Tourism Forums

Tourism Forum Locations



## Background Data Analysis

Coraggio Group conducted a review and analysis of tourism data provided by Visit Mississippi to establish a baseline understanding of the industry's performance and characteristics.

## Statewide Destination Assessment

The team completed a Statewide Destination Assessment, analyzing each tourism region's presence on trusted travel websites, the information available on local tourism organization websites, and an evaluation of the in-market experience in select destinations around the state.

## Marketing Program Evaluation

Miles Partnership completed a Marketing Program Evaluation, leveraging their deep marketing expertise to make recommendations and highlight relevant trends.

## Stakeholder Engagement

The team engaged tourism industry members across Mississippi to understand their priorities and individual destination strengths.

The following were undertaken as part of stakeholder outreach:

# 347

**STRATEGIC PLANNING  
SURVEY RESPONSES**

# 15

**1:1 INTERVIEWS**

# 10

**TOURISM FORUMS**

Hosted in Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, Cleveland, Hattiesburg, Jackson, Meridian, Natchez, Oxford, Tupelo, and Vicksburg

# Themes

Six key themes emerged from the feedback of hundreds of stakeholders engaged across the state. Each theme is considered strategically significant in Coraggio's analysis, particularly as it relates to this strategic plan.

**Mississippi's unique contemporary arts and cultural storytelling are key drivers for tourism growth.**

**Mississippi's legacy and contribution to American history and culture are elevated through arts and storytelling.**

**Infrastructure improvements and broader accessibility should be prioritized to meet visitor expectations and improve the visitor experience.**

**Evolving the narrative of Mississippi is essential to move beyond negative perceptions.**

**Empowering Mississippi's smaller towns and regions through strategic collaboration, product development, and investment to drive growth is needed.**

**Building capacity at the destination and organizational levels is essential for sustained tourism growth.**



## GET FOCUSED

With the engagement and research themes in hand, Visit Mississippi convened four working groups to review the findings and provide feedback on strategic priorities. The four working groups focused their conversations on the following topics:

### **Tourism Development, Tourism Programming, Industry Collaboration, and Tourism Marketing**

The research, stakeholder engagement, and working group input provided the foundation for the Core Planning Team to begin work crafting the plan. The team met for five planning sessions, completing work in between sessions to craft the following strategic framework elements:

**VISION:** Describes the ideal future state Visit Mississippi strives to create

**MISSION:** Describes the primary focus of Visit Mississippi and the work done each day to realize its vision

**POSITION:** Describes the unique and sustainable value that Mississippi delivers as a destination

**IMPERATIVES:** Identifies areas of focus over the plan timeline

**OBJECTIVES:** Describes the measures of success

**INITIATIVES:** Describes the duration of projects or programs that will be implemented to accomplish the Imperatives.

## GET MOVING

In the Get Moving phase, the Visit Mississippi team will execute the initiatives set forth in the plan, determining initiative leads, timing, and action steps.

A strategic plan is a useful tool for a team equipped to utilize the resource across its operations, marketing and communications, and influence throughout the state. Visit Mississippi plans to activate the new strategy through a phased approach that executes the initiatives and action steps with timing across the next three years, assigned team roles, and dynamic monitoring and evaluation.

# Tourism Working Groups



**Tourism Development**



**Tourism Programming**



**Industry Collaboration**



**Tourism Marketing**

# Strategic Plan

2025–2028





VISION

**Celebrated as the Hospitality State, Mississippi is the preferred destination for vibrant cultural heritage and unforgettable experiences, driving a dynamic tourism industry that uplifts communities and inspires visitors worldwide.**

MISSION

**As our state's storytellers, Visit Mississippi promotes and enhances the state through global marketing, creative collaboration, and leadership that inspires visitors, impacts businesses, and enriches communities.**

COMPETITIVE POSITION

**Mississippi is the Hospitality State. Visitors to the state will find:**

**The Birthplace of America's Music and world-renowned writers and artists**

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**History that continues to shape American culture today**

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**An exceptional and unmatched hospitality experience**

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**Iconic outdoor experiences, from the forested Appalachian foothills to the expansive Delta horizons and scenic coastal waterways, every mile brings a new discovery**

## Visit Mississippi's Values

**We are creative,**  
responding to opportunities and challenges in novel ways.



**We are  
determined,**  
leading with tenacity.

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# We act with care

for one another, approaching our peers and partners with empathy and humility.



# We are passionate

about our state, culture, heritage, and mission.

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# Imperatives



**Amplify  
Mississippi  
Stories**

**Enhance  
the Visitor  
Experience**

**Destination  
Development**





**Educate, Empower,  
and Support**

**Organizational  
Excellence**

# Amplify Mississippi Stories

**As the state's tourism marketing organization,** Visit Mississippi creates a destination brand and marketing campaigns that elevate the state's rich stories and experiences. This imperative drives bold, creative campaigns and strategic media efforts to showcase the authentic Mississippi experience—captivating visitors, sparking engagement, and fueling economic growth through increased tourism.





## OBJECTIVES

**Increase consumer engagement across Visit Mississippi platforms**

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**Increase visitation to the state from both drive and air travel markets**

## INITIATIVES

**Optimize and expand marketing strategies and tactics**

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**Increase and expand overall communication and public relations efforts**

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**Create new and engaging content for all platforms**

# Enhance the Visitor Experience

**Visit Mississippi serves as the  
definitive resource for travelers,**

enhancing every visitor's journey with rich, engaging insights. By expanding and deepening the information provided, Visit Mississippi elevates the state's signature hospitality, inviting visitors to discover more, stay longer, and fully immerse themselves in the authentic Mississippi experience.





## OBJECTIVES

**Increase visitors' lengths of stay across the state**

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**Increase and diversify visitor spending across the state**

## INITIATIVES

**Enhance and optimize on-the-ground resources and visitor communications**

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**Broaden, inspire, and elevate visitor exploration**

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**Amplify Welcome Center visibility and visitor engagement**

# Destination Development

**Strengthening Mississippi's destinations is key to driving economic growth.** By enhancing infrastructure and visitor experiences, the state can expand its capacity to welcome travelers while enriching both communities and guests. Through this initiative, Visit Mississippi will strategically advance destination development, maximizing tourism's impact statewide.



## OBJECTIVES

**Visit Mississippi positively influences destination development across the state**

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**Increase the number of accessibility enhancements completed**

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**Increase air passengers/new routes/share of visitors from fly markets**

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**Increase visitor sentiment**

## INITIATIVES

**Conduct a statewide comprehensive destination development review to identify key development focus areas**

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**Assess Visit Mississippi's capacity for destination development**

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**Elevate Visit Mississippi programs and communication tools to enhance accessibility**

# Educate, Empower, & Support

**Visit Mississippi is dedicated to empowering its partners** through strategic support and collaboration. By providing critical data insights, cooperative programs, and essential resources, it equips destinations and organizations to succeed. As a champion of tourism's role as a key economic driver, Visit Mississippi ensures that destinations and businesses not only grow but thrive.





## OBJECTIVES

**Increase stakeholder satisfaction with Visit Mississippi programs**

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**Continually increase stakeholder engagement with Visit Mississippi toolkits, data, and resources**

## INITIATIVES

**Educate stakeholders on the value of tourism**

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**Provide data, resources, and toolkits to empower stakeholders' strategy and marketing**

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**Collaborate and co-op with DMOs, attractions, and events to advance mutual goals**

# Organizational Excellence

**Visit Mississippi is  
committed to excellence  
in its culture, team, and  
partnerships.**

This initiative drives continuous growth, expanding the organization's reach and impact to fulfill its mission with greater effectiveness.





## OBJECTIVES

**Foster a healthy and effective organizational culture for all Visit Mississippi staff**

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**Be fully staffed/reach and maintain full time equivalent staffing**

## INITIATIVES

**Refine and maximize the utilization of all programs**

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**Strengthen internal communication, collaboration, and engagement to enhance organizational cohesion and impact**

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**Track, analyze, and communicate the ROI and key performance indicators to drive strategic growth and accountability**

# Acknowledgements

Visit Mississippi would like to thank those who supported this process by participating in the survey, interviews, tourism forums, and working groups. The Mississippi tourism industry is stronger because of the willingness and commitment of these partners to come together for the good of their communities and the state. Without their contributions, this Strategic Plan would not have been possible.

Thank you to the team at Visit Mississippi and the Welcome Centers, whose efforts to welcome and create unforgettable experiences for visitors are the heart of all that Visit Mississippi does.



# Visit Mississippi Core Planning Team

■ **Rochelle Hicks, Director**

■ **Teresa Matthews, Deputy Director**

■ **Kamel King, former Director, Office of Cultural Tourism**

■ **Paula Travis, Director, Office of Domestic & International Sales**

■ **Katie Coats, Director, Office of Marketing & Communications**

■ **Michael Jones, Director, Office of Sports & Outdoor Adventure**

■ **Marlon Ivy, Director, Office of Visitor Services**



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