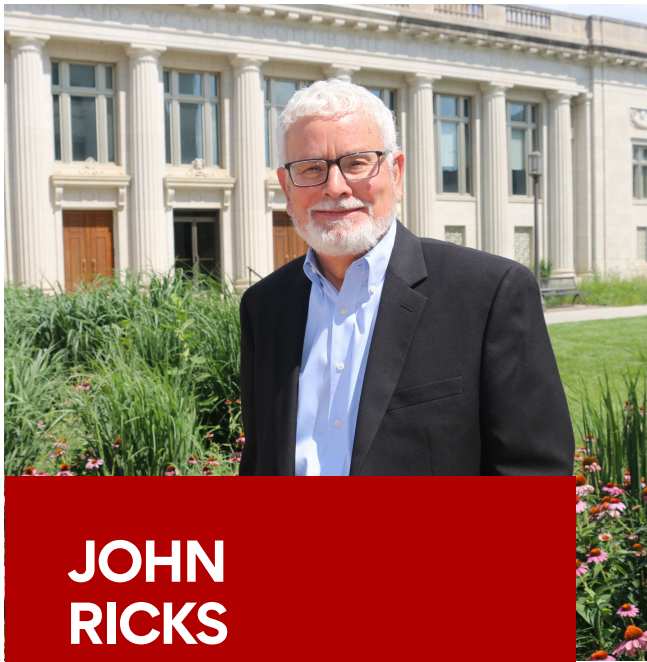


VISIT NEBRASKA

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



**JOHN
RICKS**

Visit Nebraska Executive Director

Indications suggest Nebraska's tourism industry had another record-setting year in 2024. More people than ever before chose Nebraska for their vacation, **lodging tax revenue exceeded \$8 million**, and visitor spending estimates are ahead of last year's totals through November 2024. Final expenditure totals will be available in early 2025. As we look ahead to 2025, it's worth reflecting on the progress since 2019, when new marketing strategies were introduced. The results are promising:

- 75% of all trips with at least one overnight stay or day trip were taken by out-of-state guests.

- 80% of out-of-state visitors stayed in paid accommodations.
- Marketing ROI showed that for every \$1 invested, \$20.28 in visitor spending was generated.

However, there's still work to be done. By partnering with other organizations, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of how tourism promotion supports communities including employee and business development. A recent study by Destinations International highlights this potential, revealing that **nearly 70% of people who relocated to other states were first attracted as tourists**. It's clear: today's visitors could become tomorrow's Nebraskans. This is why we're committed to driving more tourism and embracing our new identity as Visit Nebraska. Here's to a successful 2025!

John Ricks

STAFF

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Deputy Director

Jenna Bartja

Community Activation Manager

Micheal Collins

Group Tour Coordinator

Schuyler Craig

Administrative Assistant

Jenn Gjerde

Marketing Manager

Madison Johnson

Passport Program Coordinator

Ben Jones

Marketing Content Specialist

Graham Jordison

Adventure Travel Specialist

Alisha Simonson

Accountant

Lilly Uhlmann

Industry Relations

*Visit Nebraska also hires seasonal travel counselors to staff rest stops

FINANCIAL REPORT

New 2024 data from Dean Runyan and Associates shows impressive growth in Nebraska's tourism sector. Lodging revenue surged by 26.4%, far outpacing the national growth rate of 2.5%. The County Lodging Revenue for the year reached **\$30,165,374.51**. Visitor spending reached a record **\$4.6 billion**, up from **\$3.5 billion**, reflecting a 29.4% increase that surpassed the national average of 7%. Overnight guests nearly doubled to **12.6 million**.

Additionally, **Visit Nebraska** received **81 grant applications** totaling **\$1,643,850.86** in requests, showing growing interest in expanding the industry.



Lodging Tax Collected
FY23/24

\$7,743,988.77



Promotional Cash Collected
FY23/24

\$528,085.84



Appropriations
FY24/25

\$9,083,744M



Grant Dollars Awarded
in 2024

\$639,646

ADVERTISING AND ROI



 **\$4.3M**
budget

 **331M**
Impressions

TWO MIXED MEDIA CAMPAIGNS REACHED TRAVEL INTENDERS AND INSPIRED POTENTIAL TRAVELERS ACROSS THE U.S.

- Visit Nebraska ran a mixed media Sandhills Crane campaign from December 2023 through March 2024 in Denver, Des Moines, Kansas City, Minneapolis/St. Paul and Sioux Falls. The \$400K campaign garnered over **31 million impressions**. We tested a new experiential activation, a movie theatre takeover, to make a splash in one of our key drive markets: Denver. This activation garnered 137,974 impressions across cinema ads and lobby screens and garnered over 1k submissions to a personalized cranes viewing sweepstakes.
- In Summer 2024, Visit Nebraska ran a \$3.9-million-dollar mixed media campaign in the same cities, plus Oklahoma City, Madison, Chicago, Wichita, and Milwaukee. We were able to continue driving growth in the new markets of Chicago and Milwaukee. Through partnerships with brands such as Smithsonian, Outside, Hulu, Atlas Obscura, Nativo and Expedia we had a **217% increase in landing page views year-over-year**. This campaign garnered nearly **300 million impressions**.

PUBLIC RELATIONS



135

Articles Generated



9

Media Visits



52

Top 100 Articles



1,535,948,877

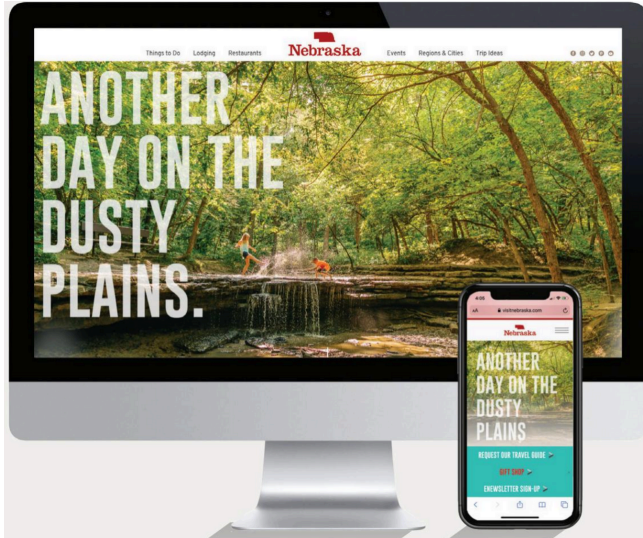
Impressions

IN 2024 VISIT NEBRASKA BOOSTED VISIBILITY THROUGH STRATEGIC SPONSORSHIPS, PRESS TRIPS AND MEDIA ENGAGEMENT.

Teaming up with TURNER PR, Visit Nebraska ran some awesome campaigns to boost the state's profile. At the Midwest Travel Network Conference, Visit Nebraska sponsored the snack bar with fun local products like Kool-Aid and Baker's Chocolate, connecting with travel writers and bloggers. At the International Media Marketplace Media Lounge in New York City, the state created a cool branded space for media, complete with promotional materials and media appointments. Press trips focused on unique spots like the Sandhill Crane migration, Junkstock and hidden gems in Omaha, Ashland and Nebraska City. On top of that, Visit Nebraska sent out **16 press releases** and did **over 50 media interviews** in-house.

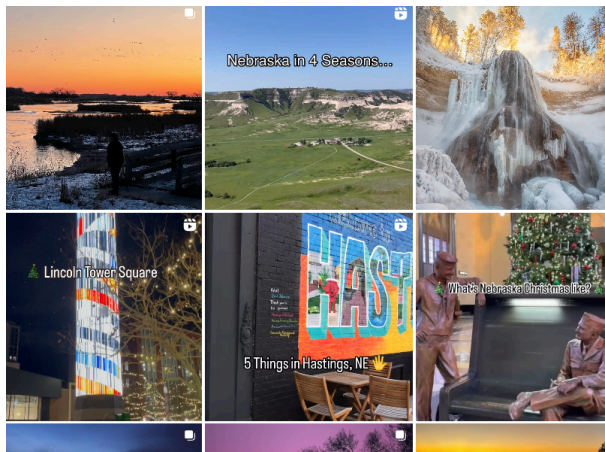
DIGITAL STRATEGIES

VISITNEBRASKA.COM



- The website had **639,671 organic search users** (up 0.2% YoY); **1,469,374 organic search page views** in 2024 (up 0.4% YoY) and **663,375 organic clicks** on **56,512,276 impressions** with a 1.17% CTR.
- Increased the a11y score in UsableNet from 72.7% to **91.6%** (increase of 18.9 points) by resolving **96,905** individual issues related to WCAG 2.2 AA conformance.

	Active Users	Partner Referrals	Page Views
WEBSITE	1.2 M	267K	2.5 M



- Visit Nebraska's organic content, *engaging* over 1 million **Facebook** users with trip ideas, photos and videos in 2024, *reaching* a total of 7.1 million users.
- Visit Nebraska's **Instagram** saw strong engagement and follower growth, reaching over 39K followers by the end of 2024.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook:



**46.3% YOY
GROWTH IN
ENGAGEMENT**

Instagram



**14.6% YOY
GROWTH IN
FOLLOWERS**

FACEBOOK.COM/VISITNEBRASKA

INSTAGRAM.COM/VISIT_NEBRASKA



TRAVEL GUIDE

The **2024 Not-At-All What You Thought Nebraska Official Visitor Guide** paid tribute to the original settlers and the real people and places who make up the “**Roots of Nebraska.**” This 112-page issue touched on all regions of the state, no matter the population size, and incorporated content made by real travelers and Nebraska locals to show how any reader can easily become a part of our story. **Guides were requested by individuals in all 50 states in the U.S. and several countries.**

Visit Nebraska distributes guides via direct fulfillment from our website; bulk distribution to local visitor bureaus and chamber offices; and regular distribution through various programs including a rack program, Nebraska Travel Association Brochure Swap, National Western Stock Show booth and two newspaper insertions: Minneapolis Star Tribune and Chicago Tribune.

In the 2024 guide Visit Nebraska included Native American voices by incorporating eight hand drawn custom icons, symbols and patterns throughout the guide. The 784-word article titled “An Invitation to Visit the Land of my Ancestors” was the first-ever Native American authored article shared in the state’s visitor guide.

Between May 15 and September 8, 2024, **Visit Nebraska staffed 25 counselors at 10 centers**, promoting tourism, offering travel advice, distributing Travel Guides and boosting visitor numbers statewide.

DISTRIBUTION

19,467

Visitor Guide Requests from Website

200K

Physical Guide Circulation

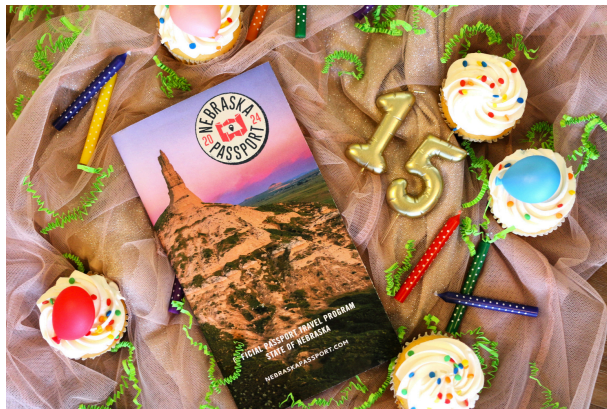
40

Advertisers featured to help offset production costs

173K

Travelers visited one of Visit Nebraska’s staffed centers

NEBRASKA PASSPORT



SUMMER 2024

The Nebraska Passport offers diverse travel adventures each year, including museums, parks, restaurants, wineries, and more. Each year, **70 new stops** are selected through an application process. For its **15th anniversary** in 2024, **15 bonus stops** were added, featuring fan favorites voted on by past Passport Champions.

50,000

Nebraska Passport
booklets distributed

1,083

Passport Champions

HOLIDAY PASSPORT 2024

The Holiday Passport is a mini-Passport, where you'll find **20 unique Holiday stops**, experiences and ways to make memories. The 2024 Holiday Passport ran from November 22, 2024 - January 8, 2025.

10,000

Holiday Passports distributed

!!!!!!!!!!!!

Holiday Passport Participants

EDUCATION

NEBRASKA TOURISM UNITY SUMMIT

Visit Nebraska held the 2024 Tourism Unity Summit February 7 at the Graduate Hotel in Lincoln. The event brought together members of the tourism industry, community representatives and local officials for a day of education, speakers and networking opportunities. Speakers included keynotes by Aaron Davis, Bill Geist and Clayton Anderson, in addition to breakout sessions. The Summit wrapped with “Night at the Museum” to celebrate tourism across the state as the industry explored the Nebraska History Museum and gained insights into the future.

AGRITOURISM & ADVENTURE TRAVEL WORKSHOP

The Agritourism & Adventure Travel Workshop held its first bi-state event with South Dakota from November 5-7, 2024. Over fifty attendees gathered in Yankton for a keynote by Eliza Blue and sampled local products. They then toured northeast Nebraska and southeast South Dakota to explore successful tourism businesses. Highlights included a guest appearance by the Heartland Docs, a meal by Native chef Anthony Warrior at Hotel Hartington and gourmet pizza at Good Earth Farm alongside rescued farm animals.



TRADE SHOWS AND EVENTS

In 2024, Visit Nebraska promoted the state by participating in key trade shows and sponsorships. These events allowed the agency to showcase Nebraska's tourism offerings, network with industry professionals, and build partnerships, ultimately attracting more visitors and enhancing the state's visibility in national and international travel markets.



Sponsorships

- **National Western Stock Show**
Denver
1/3-1/21
- **American Bus Association**
Nashville
1/13-1/16
- **TEAMS**
Anaheim
9/23-9/26

Group Travel Shows

- Select Traveler Conference
- IPW
- Travel Alliance Partners
- TAP Dance
- National Tour Association Travel Exchange

Conferences

- Destinations International
- eTourism Summit
- ESTO
- HSMAI
- IMM / TravMedia Summit
- Kansas Tourism Conference
- MarketTech
- MTJA Spring Conference
- MTN Conference
- National Council of State Travel Directors
- Upper Midwest CVB

PARTNERSHIPS

As the official marketing agency for the State of Nebraska, enhancing awareness of the tourism industry is at the heart of our mission. Visit Nebraska works closely with a range of state agencies to drive impactful outcomes. In 2024, these collaborations led to a variety of successful initiatives, including (but not limited to):

Nebraska Game & Parks Commission – Contributed ad shares and photography resources for our publications, sponsored workshops, and participated in monthly collaborative staff meetings, among other initiatives.

Nebraska Department of Economic Development – Created a welcome page on our website to attract new residents, with the DED director joining our board as an active member. We continue to work closely with Six Regions, One Nebraska to drive shared goals.

Nebraska Arts Council – Promoted Creative Districts and grant awards, supported event promotions, and collaborated on the upcoming I-80 Sculpture project through ongoing meetings.

Nebraska State Historical Society – Engaged in collaborative meetings, provided access to archives, and worked together on Wander Nebraska promotions and grant awards.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln – Managed Nebraska Passport prize distribution and printing.

Visit Nebraska is committed to strengthening collaboration across the state, and our newly created Community Activation Manager role will play a pivotal part in deepening connections with communities and tourism partners. This role brings fresh perspectives and energy, furthering our mission to amplify Nebraska's tourism efforts.

IN 2025...

Visit Nebraska is gearing up for an exciting year, starting with more Nebraska Passport activations this summer. These activations will give locals and visitors the chance to explore unique destinations across the state. It's a great way to highlight Nebraska's hidden gems and diverse attractions.

In addition, we'll produce the 2026 Travel Guide, which will see a significant update following a vote by our board in 2024 to remove listings. This change will allow us to focus on creating more creative and meaningful content to better highlight the best of Nebraska for travelers.

Finally, we're excited to continue growing our presence on social media, with a focus on vertical video content. As trends shift, we're committed to staying ahead and engaging with our audience in fresh, authentic ways.

It's shaping up to be a fantastic year, and we're excited to continue working together to promote Nebraska as a premier travel destination!

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COMMISSION

DISTRICT 1 REPRESENTATIVE

ROBERT SABIN
GENERAL MANAGER OF HILTON OMAHA

DISTRICT 2 REPRESENTATIVE

JOHN CHAPO
PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF LINCOLN CHILDREN'S
ZOO

DISTRICT 3 REPRESENTATIVE

JEANNA STAVAS
OWNER AND INNKEEPER OF WHISPERING PINES
BED & BREAKFAST

DISTRICT 4 REPRESENTATIVE

ROGER KUHN
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF NEBRASKA GAME &
PARKS COMMISSION

DISTRICT 5 REPRESENTATIVE

DARRIN BARNER
NATIONAL RECRUITING SPECIALIST FOR
HERITAGE HOMES OF NEBRASKA

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OWNER OF MAC'S CREEK VINEYARDS AND
WINERY

DISTRICT 11 REPRESENTATIVE

STARR LEHL
GROW NEBRASKA

NDED REPRESENTATIVE

KC BELITZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE

VACANT