



**STRATEGIC PLAN
2022-2027**

WHO WE ARE

Southern DE Tourism (SDT) is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Sussex County, Delaware. SDT is a 501(C) (6) non-profit DMO incorporated in 1989 under the name of Association of Sussex County Chambers of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc. later referred to as the Sussex County Convention and Tourism Commission.

VISION STATEMENT

By collaborating with community stakeholders, SDT will position Sussex County, Delaware to thrive as a premier travel destination.

MISSION STATEMENT

To support and encourage the identification, development, and promotion of sustainable, year-round tourism in Southern Delaware that contributes to economic growth and improves the quality of life.

CORE VALUES (TRIP)

- **Transparency:** Communicate honestly and respectfully by providing positive and consistent tourism messaging and be proactively open to stakeholder and community scrutiny; Uphold the highest standards of integrity and stewardship by demonstrating honesty, fairness and trustworthiness in action and intent
- **Relevancy:** Stay closely connected and involved in stakeholder and community shared values, by using data-driven evidence, to promote balanced economic development, sustainable tourism, and quality of life; Do great things together by challenging assumptions to foster innovation and to promote continuous improvement by seeking personal and professional growth
- **Inclusion:** Create a more diverse and inclusive SDT by respecting and valuing broad participation in stakeholder and community dialogue while embracing diversity of thought in decision-making; Build public support and engagement around the shared vision of making Southern Delaware a premier tourist destination by leveraging our collective genius
- **Passion:** Generate excitement, nurture ideas, inspire excellence and find creative ways to eliminate obstacles for cultivating SDT's growth and prosperity

Strategic Purposes:

The 2022- 2027 Strategic Plan will focus on the following areas:

Marketing: Continue to provide positive and consistent tourism messaging utilizing a variety of communication tools and resources.

Collaboration/Partnerships: SDT continues to develop partnerships with community stakeholders to collaborate on making Southern Delaware a premier tourist destination.

Communication: SDT conveys accurate and current information to positively impact the visitor experience to Southern Delaware. SDT will enhance the communication shared with Board members to enhance their knowledge of SDT's role and their impact on economic growth and the quality of life in Southern Delaware.

Diversity/Inclusiveness: Create and promote opportunities for diverse groups of visitors to enjoy Southern Delaware and provide activities for various ages and cultural backgrounds to create a unifying experience. Educate the community on engaging activities that take place throughout Southern Delaware appealing to culturally diverse groups.

Leadership: Continue to provide excellent information and services to our tourism partners and the community through the knowledge, expertise, and support of the SDT staff and Board members.

Fiscal Governance: SDT manages a fiscally responsible operation and continues to explore opportunities to enhance short-term rental equalization.

Collaboration/Partnerships

STRATEGY 1: Utilize the collective efforts of SDT’s dedicated leaders and professional staff to manage an organization that meets and exceeds Board member needs.

GOAL 1: Strengthen SDT’s current areas of excellence through collaboration/partnerships with the community.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1. Define and expand community beyond current tourism business partners: Chambers of Commerce and municipal governments.
- 2. Identify opportunities to further collaborate on programs, activities, and events.
- 3. Strengthen existing partnerships with all Chambers of Commerce.
- 4. Create business friendly partnerships to provide connections to SDT and ensure destinations beyond the beaches are clearly communicated and publicized.
- 5. Continue to listen to community stakeholders on their thoughts and recommendations for best marketing of activities/experiences in Southern Delaware.

Communications

STRATEGY 2: Identify needs and wants from the community and visitors. Provide a strong communication plan to educate and enhance their knowledge of Southern Delaware.

External Communication:

GOAL 1: Assess demographics and needs of current visitors and communities. Use this information to determine the best way to continue to provide data-driven evidence of the ever-evolving tourism opportunities in Southern Delaware.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1. Identify stories to tell and connect the community to new destinations within Southern Delaware.
- 2. Consider a needs assessment to learn how visitors and Board members stay abreast of the variety of programs, destinations and services offered.

3. Sustain and enhance the Mobile App: “*SouthDel SideKick*” to promote outdoor experiences with local business and community partners.
4. Become an “one- stop shop” to provide current and updated information for what’s going on in Southern Delaware’s 25 incorporated towns in Sussex County.
5. Consider methods to put all SDT visitor information in one place.

Internal Communication:

STRATEGY 3: Analyze communication methods to ensure SDT staff are aware of the variety of programs, activities, and updates.

GOAL 1: Develop an operational communication plan.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Maintain consistent communication between the Executive Director, staff, and Board members to ensure information is consistently shared about SDT activities, events, and programs.
2. Continue to identify “best practices” for internal communication and ways to ensure information is shared in a timely manner.
3. Consider expanding SDT Board to include additional Board members from each Chamber as acceptable in the by-laws and to reflect the growth of Southern Delaware communities.

Diversity/Inclusiveness

STRATEGY 4: Develop programs and activities throughout Southern Delaware for groups of visitors of various ages, cultural backgrounds, people with disabilities and those from traditionally marginalized groups to create a unifying experience.

GOAL 1: Identify and create opportunities to meet the desires and needs of all visitors to Southern Delaware.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Create an advocacy and response plan to address diversity issues that arise and train partners on how they might assist with initiatives that develop as a result.
2. Continue to engage in conversations with the community about how SDT can meet visitor needs and help them to feel included and welcomed.
3. Assess the demographics of SDT’s business partners and ensure they are represented and included in planning for future tourism opportunities.
4. Recruit and hire new talent to maximize diversity and inclusion efforts.

LEADERSHIP

STRATEGY 5: Develop and support Southern Delaware Tourism leadership and operational management.

GOAL 1: Continue to provide excellent information and services to the public, visitor, and the community through a knowledgeable and caring SDT Executive Director, Staff and Board support.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Continue to provide SDT's staff with the resources and professional development to meet tourism partner needs.
2. Continue to advance programs and enhance visitor knowledge of all there is to do in Southern Delaware.
3. Prepare for turn-over/retirement in leadership roles within area Chambers of Commerce by providing leadership development opportunities designed to ensure a smooth transition.

GOAL 2: Develop a succession plan to maintain SDT leadership

OBJECTIVES:

1. Consider a staff mentoring program coordinated by Executive Directors and other leaders to ensure their knowledge of SDT is preserved for future leadership.
2. Assure staff professional development.
3. Develop a recruitment plan to identify qualified candidates.

MARKETING

STRATEGY 6: Emphasize marketing as the premier communication tool to broaden the public's knowledge of SDT destinations and those who are visiting Southern Delaware.

GOAL 1: Reinforce the SDT brand so it will be recognized and sought as a "go to" place for a world-class visitor experience.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Utilize media kits to promote the SDT brand.
2. Share Point File by providing access for all Board members.
3. Expand current visitor satisfaction survey and offer an incentive for completion.

GOAL 2: Provide positive and consistent tourism messaging by incorporating several communication tools and resources.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Clearly and consistently communicate the marketing plan with Board members.
2. Create an Ambassador program and invest in the certification process to create sustainable liaison and partnership opportunities with SDT.
3. Consider partnerships with High School marketing and business clubs to advocate for tourism as a viable career path. Emphasize a contemporary curriculum and experiential learning in a student-focused environment.
4. Recruit and hire high school and college students as interns in a variety of tourism positions.
5. Develop ways for SDT's staff to partner with Sussex County Chambers of Commerce to update the information provided to the public.

Fiscal Governance

STRATEGY 7: SDT will continue to manage a fiscally responsible operation and explore opportunities to enhance short-term rental equalization.

GOAL 1: Increase financial knowledge and competency among SDT Board and members.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Create a sustainable fiscal plan to include a competitive employee compensation plan.
 - a. Continue to follow SDT formula of 80% marketing and 20% administration for allocation of budget.
2. Advocate to expand the State of Delaware's Public Accommodation Tax (PAT) to include *all* short-term rentals.
3. Develop a timeline and operational plan for managing the Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant.
4. Utilize surplus funds through a Board-approved, prudent investment plan.
5. Explore funding opportunities from government entities.
6. Assure disclosure, transparency, and public access to financial information.