



IOWA CITY AREA  
SPORTS COMMISSION

## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



## PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**\$7,417,283**

GRANTS REFERRED TO LOCAL  
PARTNERS AND MUNICIPALITIES

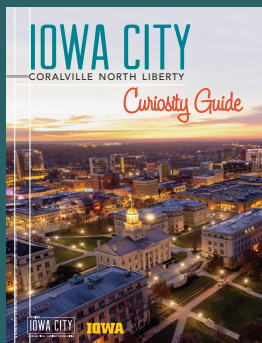
**21**

GRANTS REFERRED TO LOCAL  
PARTNERS AND MUNICIPALITIES

**\$337,078.80**

GRANTS AWARDED TO  
THINK IOWA CITY AND THE IOWA CITY  
AREA SPORTS COMMISSION

## VISITOR SERVICES



VISITOR INQUIRIES FROM<sup>#</sup>

**37** STATES

\* FY22  
# Calendar Year 22

## SPORTING & SPECIAL EVENTS

**[\$9.96 MILLION]**

ECONOMIC IMPACT

OF PRODUCED & SUPPORTED SPORTING/SPECIAL EVENTS

**68,887**

TOTAL ATTENDANCE

OF PRODUCED & SERVICED EVENTS



## FY22 REGIONAL SPORTS AUTHORITY DISTRICT GRANT RECIPIENTS

IWCOA Iowa Girls State Wrestling  
Iowa/USAW Kids State Tournament  
MVC Swimming & Diving Championships  
Iowa Swimming Short Course Championships  
Special Olympics Mid-Winter Tournament  
RunCRANDIC  
Clippers Baseball Tournament  
Clash On The Courts  
David Armbruster Open  
HJGT College Prep Series at Iowa  
Varsity UDA/UCA High School Cheer & Dance Competition  
IHSAA 3A/4A State Baseball Tournament  
IASI Long Course Championship  
Grizzlies Wheelchair Basketball Tournament  
IGHSAU Girls' Volleyball State Championship  
World Team Challenge Tournament

## FY22 COMMUNITY GRANT RECIPIENTS

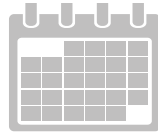
Summer of the Arts  
Coralville 4thFest  
North Liberty Blues & BBQ  
Mission Creek Festival  
Iowa City Book Festival  
Latino Fest Iowa City  
Free Shakespeare  
Iowa City Pride  
North Liberty's Beat the Bitter  
Mic Check Poetry Fest  
ReFocus Film Festival  
South District Diversity Market  
5th Street Social  
Big Dreams Fashion Festival  
Vice Presents, Kick-it Iowa City  
Local Foods Festival  
Why IF (intellectual freedom) Matters  
Iowa City Expo for Comics and Real Eclectic Alternative Media (ICE CREAM)  
Global Community Dinner  
Feed Me Weird Festival  
IARGUS Fall Festival: Ukrainian Music  
The Art in Action Project  
KidLit Pizzazz Festival  
Prompt for the Planet Showcase  
Open Gardens Weekend

## SALES & SERVICING



**1,655**  
ROOM NIGHTS

**\$2.2 MIL**  
FUTURE BOOKINGS



**3,270**  
MEETINGS  
ATTENDANCE

**[\$1.2 MILLION]**

ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT  
OF CVB GENERATED LEADS

**56**  
GROUPS SERVICED<sup>#</sup>

**12,456**  
TOTAL GROUP ATTENDANCE<sup>#</sup>



**\$10.7 MILLION** TOTAL DIRECT  
SPENDING<sup>#</sup>

## MARKETING

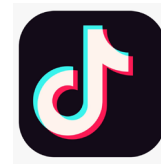
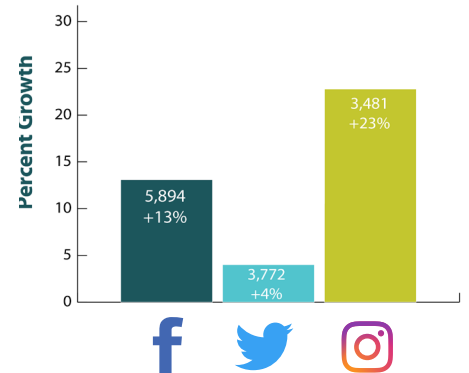
UNIQUE WEB  
VISITORS<sup>#</sup>

**206,291**  
+4% YOY

**436,315**  
+19% YOY

TOTAL  
PAGEVIEWS<sup>#</sup>

SOCIAL FOLLOWERS<sup>#</sup>



**1600%**  
YOY Growth  
425 overall followers

Johnson County Hotel/Motel Tax Revenue  
\*only includes contributing municipalities



## VISITOR SPENDING & ECONOMIC IMPACT

Johnson County	Tourism & Hospitality Employment	Share of State	Labor Income (Millions)	State Taxes (Millions)	Local Taxes (Millions)	Spending (Millions)
Total	4,248	6.5%	\$129.70	\$38.38	\$50.74	\$560.62

Visitor Spending 2020 (Millions)	Lodging	F&B	Recreation	Retail	Transport	Total	Growth Rate (2020/2019)	Share of State
Johnson County	\$72.81	\$89.04	\$46.57	\$66.55	\$89.28	\$364.26	37.7%	5.9%
Iowa	\$1,137.42	\$1,369.05	\$958.67	\$1,067.15	\$1,615.24	\$6,147.53	34.7%	100.0%

Visitor Spending (Millions)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Johnson County	\$333.08	\$341.19	\$365.70	\$379.91	\$264.61	\$364.26
Iowa	\$5,664.63	\$5,828.53	\$6,250.53	\$6,449.11	\$4,565.20	\$6,147.53

## FROM THE BOARD CHAIR, SHANTI ROUNDTREE

2022 was the year of putting **unity** back into community as University Heights joined forces with Iowa City, Coralville, and North Liberty in welcoming newcomers and residents alike to feel at home and enjoy the diverse events, initiatives, and activities unique to our area. Overnight lodging increased an average of 16% over 2021, for an average room night demand of 63,000 rooms. Our staff's conference and group sales efforts yielded an overall direct spending impact of more than 10 million, showcasing the power of collaboration (and a comfortable night's sleep).



Our 2022 sports successes continue to provide testament to why this area remains a premier destination for sports enthusiasts and peak athleticism. Coralville, along with athletes and spectators from around the planet, cheered on the first ever UWW Freestyle and Women's Wrestling World Cup. This event combined with another highly successful Donnybrook and inaugural Soldier Salute cemented the promised behind our Wrestle Town USA brand. Women and girls ruled courts and hearts in at the IGHSU Girls State Volleyball Championship and State Tennis Tournaments.

Financing and funding streams flowed into our community through the Iowa City Tourism Grant, CVB Community Grant, Destination Marketing Fund, Regional Sports Authority District (RSAD) Grant, and more. These opportunities were designed to create immediate and future betterment by encouraging economic activities around education, literature, the arts, and the awe-inspiring river that joins our foodways, parks, and the recreational centers where we gather. Strategic alignments with Iowa City Business Partnership, Iowa City Area Development, Iowa City Downtown District, and the newly formed South of Six Business District around 2030 Better Together visioning ensure we continue to incentivize tourism while aligning for maximum growth and impact across our communities.

You'll be surprised how much more there is to learn about the next steps that the energetic Think Iowa City and Iowa City Area Sports Commission teams have in store for 2023 and beyond. But don't just take my word for it—after reading this report ask Josh and his team about details and new ways you can help us. Let's continue community building to be All In for our areas' shared future and economic success!

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shanti Roundtree, Board Chair  
Pearson

Mitch Gross, Treasurer  
City Council - Coralville

Jake Moore  
GreenState Credit Union

Laura Soride  
RE/MAX Affiliates

Peter Matthes, Past Chair  
UI Strategic Communications

Dale Arens  
UI Athletics Hall of Fame

Royceann Porter, Ex-Officio  
Johnson County Supervisor

Bruce Teague  
Mayor-City of Iowa City

Kelly Murphy, Vice Chair  
Courtyard by Marriott  
University Heights

Jeff Capps  
Iowa Children's Museum

Josh Schamberger, Ex-Officio  
Iowa City/Coralville Area CVB

Matt Traetow  
Hyatt Regency

RaQuishia Harrington,  
Secretary  
City Council-North Liberty

Brian Flynn  
30hop, Joe's Place, Tin Roost

Bobby Scott  
City Council - University Heights

Amanda Tumer  
Kinseth Hospitality

## STAFF

Nia Britt  
Intern, Iowa City Aea Sports  
Commission

Donna Jondle  
Visitor Services Assistant

Monica Nieves  
Vice President of Marketing  
& Communications

Josh Schamberger  
President

Luke Eustice  
Director, Iowa City Area Sports  
Commission

Nick Kaeding  
Senior Vice President of  
Finance & Administration

Nick Pfeiffer  
Vice President of Public Affairs

Ashley Smith  
Operations Manager

Stacy Houseman  
Vice President of Sales & Event  
Experience

Quentin Mendlik  
Manager of Video & Digital  
Marketing

Sarah Pinkowski  
Intern, Iowa City Sports  
Commission

Kylee Stock  
Special Events Manager

Kylee Walker  
Sports Development Manager,  
Iowa City Area Sports  
Commission



## PUBLIC AFFAIRS - 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW



In February 2022, Nick Pfeiffer transferred from Vice President of Marketing & Communications to the newly created role of Vice President of Public Affairs to provide oversight into grant funding, destination planning, and government relations. In the realm of government relations, he works with all the local municipalities on placemaking initiatives and coordination as well as the state government on tourism advocacy.

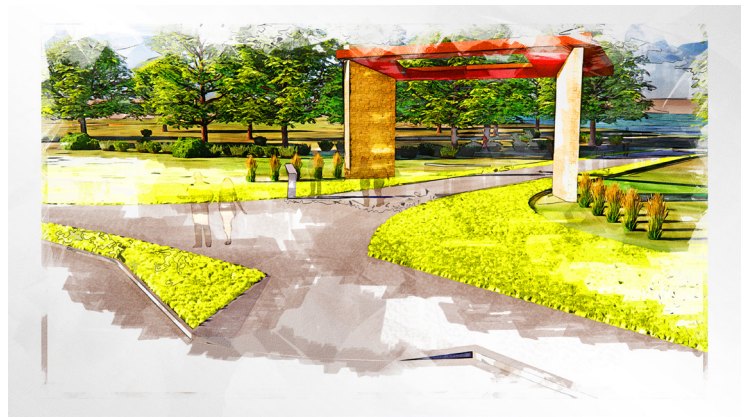
2022 saw an influx of dollars for tourism activities at the state level. \$30.5 million in new funding appropriations related to tourism was funded. This included \$1.5 million of new money for the Iowa Tourism office for marketing outside of the state, \$10 million for Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) grant funds, \$5 million for state park improvements, and \$1.15 million for Iowa Great Places. Additionally, the governor assigned \$100 million in ARPA funds for Destination Iowa grants to bolster the quality of life in Iowa's communities and attract visitors and new residents to the state. The state funded \$1 million for the Meet in Iowa program to stimulate business, meeting, conference, festival, group, and sports travel overnight stays. Finally, the state introduced the Sports Tourism Marketing grant program of \$1.5 million to provide assistance in promoting amateur level sporting events in Iowa.

Think Iowa City and the Iowa City Area Sports Commission were able to take advantage of these programs to the tune of \$337,000 in 2022 alone. These funds provide direct economic impact multipliers to the hotels, restaurants, retailers, and residents of Johnson County.



As part of the Better Together 2030 Vision, making the Iowa River a signature attraction for residents and visitors was established as one of the 11 primary priorities. A key step in achieving this goal is the establishment of a comprehensive plan involving Iowa City, Coralville, North Liberty, Hills, Tiffin, Johnson County, the University of Iowa, and a variety of engaged user groups along the river. Pfeiffer is leading this plan, which started with an application for a \$6.9 million grant from Destination Iowa. This complex grant

application included improvements for canoe drops, park space, trail expansions, skate park improvements, amphitheater buildouts and more. Dubbed the Pedal Paddle Destination of the Midwest, this project will provide improved access to the Iowa River for paddle activities such as kayaking, canoeing, and paddle boarding plus align the nearby trails for cycling and hiking. As of the date of this publication grant dollars have not been awarded to this project, but optimism remains. Regardless of the grant, enthusiasm for improvements around the Iowa River have heightened as it has long been a sleeping giant for recreational activity and placemaking in the community.





## SPECIAL EVENTS - 2022 IN REVIEW



To kick off 2022, we showcased and celebrated the culinary scene in Johnson County through our annual Foodie February social media campaign and Restaurant Week. We set a record number of 60 participating restaurants! Participating customers downloaded the IC Foodie Pass to view menu specials and track their engagement during Restaurant Week.

In September, we held our annual FRYfest event that kicks off the Iowa Hawkeye football season. The theme for the 13th anniversary was "Celebrating 50 Years of University of Iowa Women's Athletics" while also honoring the 50th year of Title IX. For this, we welcomed the Iowa Women's Basketball and Women's Wrestling teams for an autograph session. Other programming included: a panel from the 2022 Hall of Fame class, the World's Largest Hawkeye Tradeshow, a bags tournament, and a concert from Restless Road. FRYfest continues to be an attraction for visitors and our community. We are excited to celebrate 14 years of FRYfest in 2023.

We were honored to sponsor this year's 50 Years of Women's Athletics at the University of Iowa. Through this sponsorship, we are able to support the year long programming that the University of Iowa Athletics Department has presented, including the documentary about Christine Grant's life and a gala that will cap off the year this May.

Alongside the events that we curate, we also play a supporting role in community events that our partners host. North Liberty's Beat the Bitter and Blues and BBQ, Iowa City Downtown District's Block Party and Taste of Iowa City, and the plethora of Summer of the Arts activities that keep our community engaged. This also includes sporting events initiated or hosted by the Iowa City Area Sports Commission, like the UWW Freestyle & Women's Wrestling World Cup, Iowa Girls Highschool Volleyball Championships, and Soldier Salute collegiate wrestling tournament, just to name a few. In 2023, we look forward to growing our special events and continuing our efforts to attract visitors into our curious community.



THINK IOWA CITY  
RESTAURANT  
WEEK  
FEBRUARY 18-28, 2022  
#ICFOODIE PASS

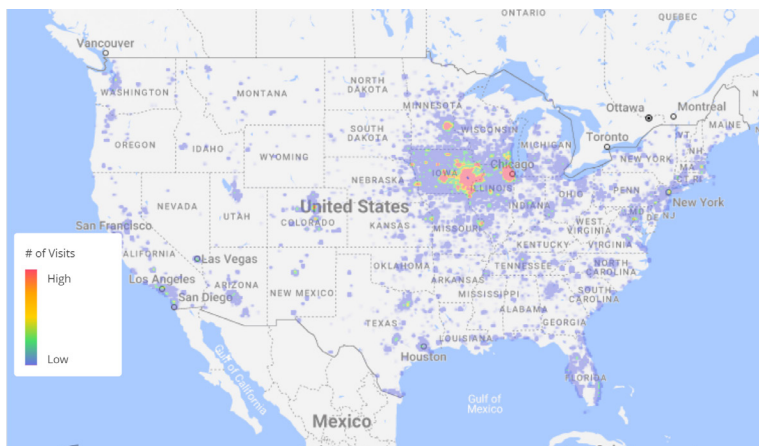


## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS - 2022 IN REVIEW



Monica Nieves transitioned into the role of Vice President of Marketing and Communications in early 2022. Shortly after her transition, our new website ThinkIowaCity.com was launched and we have since seen our website engagement increase 19% in total page views. It has been exciting to also see our social media following continuing to grow, thanks in large part to Quentin Mendlik's commitment to creativity. In the fall of 2021 we jumped on the TikTok bandwagon and have seen a 1600% increase in followers since then. While we only have 425 followers at the time of this report, our most popular videos have been viewed between 10, to 12,000 times. Our Instagram followers continue to see the most growth year-over-year.

2022 saw a return to pre-COVID conditions for travelers and tourism. The annual average room night demand was just over 63,000 compared to an average of just over 57,000 in 2019. Room demand in July was again the highest overall month at 77,813. We can again say that the Iowa City/Coralville area continues to draw unique visitors thanks to our Curious Communities and the wide variety of amenities that we offer.



Iowa City, IA / Iowa City, Iowa, United States | Based on Home Location, by Visits | Min. Visits: 1 | Jan 1st 2022 to Dec 31st 2022 | The locations shown are obfuscated for privacy and randomly placed within a census block. They do not represent actual home addresses. Data provided by Placer Labs Inc. ([www.placer.ai](http://www.placer.ai))

In 2022 we began using Placer to help us learn more about the visitors coming to the area – who they are, where they go when they come to town, and most significantly where they are coming from. This data has helped us and our marketing partner, Meld, to be even more strategic in our advertising strategy. In 2022, Iowa City alone saw 386.7k unique visitors. Detroit, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Denver were in the top ten home locations.

We were again honored with several awards and accolades in 2022. We were excited to once again be nominated as a top destination by GayTravel.com amongst other US Cities like San Francisco and New

York City. Coralville was named one of the Top 50 Best Places to Live by Money Magazine and Iowa City was named one of the Top 50 places to live by Livability magazine showing that not only is our area a great place to visit, it's an even better place to live. Iowa City was also named one of the Best Places for Families by FortuneWell Magazine.

In addition to the above, we continue to partner and support the Better Together 2030 initiative led by Cady Gerlach. In 2022 we held our annual BRAVO Awards alongside our partner organizations and recognized community members that work fell into the five pillars of the BT2030 All In Vision Plan: Champions of the Natural Environment; Authentic and Vibrant Neighborhoods; A Well Connected, Mobile Region; Thriving, Inclusive Economic Ecosystem; and Re-Imagined Human Services. Monica will continue to play an important role in the Better Together 2030 work.

## AWARDS & ACCOLADES



Iowa City was named in the 2021 Top 100 Best Places to Live in America by Livability



Coralville was named in the Top 50 Best Places to Live in America by Money Magazine



Iowa City was again nominated for the 2022 Destination City of the Year by GayTravel. Others nominated: Chicago, New York, Atlanta, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Miami



## CONFERENCE SALES & EVENT EXPERIENCE - 2022 IN REVIEW



Conference and group sales continued to shift out of the cloud of the pandemic in 2022. With attendees feeling more comfortable and ready to get back to in person meetings, planners reported high to even record breaking attendance at events. Regardless of those positive movements, the Iowa City area isn't immune to some adverse national trends. Staffing shortages, especially at the beginning of the year, along with inflation are making food and beverage and audio/visual costs challenging line items between planners and properties. The business traveler market segment has yet to return, if it ever will, and meetings sales at hotels has had to step up in a big way to help fill those gaps in room nights. We know now more than ever it was important to partner with our local meeting space hotels to drive group sales to our area. We listened to our hotels, what their need date gaps are, and where we can best collaborate on new and existing business.

Stacey Houseman transitioned into the role of Vice President of Sales and Event Experience in February. With that came the opportunity to utilize the year to re-build and re-connect with meeting planners and groups. We focused on in-person introductions and traveled to three tradeshow this year where we had the opportunity to sit down and talk face-to-face with over one hundred national planners. These in-person meetings help to build awareness as to why Iowa City/Coralville is an amazing place to source and host events. Not only do tradeshow provide leads and sales connections, but also allow us to network with other destination marketing organizations, getting insight into their best sales practices and successes that have potential to be executed into our own destination.

A larger investment was made into our regional meeting planner organizations, Iowa Society of Association Executives and Meeting Planners International - Heartland Chapter. Houseman attended quarterly and annual meetings and participated on forums and breakouts. These groups serve as essential resources for getting know our state associations and regional corporate planners. We encourage our local hotels to also utilize these directories and events as a tool for sales.



Think Iowa City continues to prioritize the importance of building event experiences in 2022. Amplifying and highlighting area amenities, attractions and unique community elements including off-site activity options for programs play an important role in meeting sales. Think Iowa City welcomes groups and makes them feel like VIPs while in the area to ensure their return in future years.



The energy and vibrancy of our community is best witnessed first-hand. We hosted a familiarization tour for six conference/group planners and two sports planners across the country in September. This fall tour took place over three days in partnership with our local hotels. We had the opportunity to showcase some of our communities' unique assets, including Wilson's Orchard & Farm, Cedar Ridge, Hancher, and the newly opened Stanley Art Museum. One of the highlights and favorite elements of this year's tour was an al fresco dinner served in Iowa City's Northside Downtown District. Dishes from every Northside restaurant were provided, making for a truly unique experience. The return on investment of this event was solidified by the booking of the Defenders National Rally in 2024. This national event will take place over the course of seven days that will bring direct impact to our local hotels and restaurants.

2023 looks to be bright as we focus on acquiring new sales marketing collateral, execute new sales lead sourcing initiatives, and continue to build our relationships with planners. The more visible we are in a regional and national capacity as an affordable and accessible destination for groups, the more our community will see dividends moving forward.



# IOWA CITY AREA SPORTS COMMISSION - 2022 IN REVIEW



A full year of welcoming the best athletes in the state, country, and world to Johnson County in 2022! We again cemented ourselves as #WrestleTownUSA hosting all levels of wrestling over the past year. Starting with the IWCOA Iowa Girls State Wrestling tournament which saw over 750 high school girls compete over two days, almost doubling from 2021. The Iowa/USAW Kids State Wrestling tournament and Wrestle Like a Girl "Iowa Classic" brought grade school age boys and girls from around the Midwest to Xtream Arena as well. In May we hosted the USA Wrestling World Team Trials Challenge wrestling tournament bringing the best senior level athletes in the county to town for a chance to earn the right to represent Team USA at the World Championships in Belgrade.



Iowa City/Coralville: Where State Championships are won! 2022 saw Iowa City/Coralville play host to numerous Iowa High School State Championships for both the boys and girls. Boys State Swimming and Diving at the CRWC, Girls 2A State Tennis at the HTRC, Boys 3A/4A State Baseball at Duane Banks Field and finally playing host to a record attendance of 30,800 people for the Girls State Volleyball Tournament. More championships are already slated for 2023, and we are excited to continue to play host to the best high school athletes in the state of Iowa.



Then there was December! Thanks to everyone in the community pulling together we pulled off three major wrestling tournaments in the month of December. Dan Gable Donnybrook welcomed 40 boys' teams and 28 girls' teams from seven states to compete in the first weekend of December. This event brought in over 850 athletes, 400 coaches, and 3,000 spectators for the three days of competition which culminated in the inaugural kids' tournament called the Dan Gable Junior Donnybrook which saw another 300 kids compete in the one-day event. We then welcomed the world four days later, when the UWW Freestyle and

Women's World Cup kicked off. Wrestlers from 19 countries competed over two days. Post-World Cup, six international women's teams stayed in town for an extra week for a training camp in Iowa City, giving our local grade school and high school girls access to watch the best women wrestlers in the world train daily. Finally, the month of December culminated with the inaugural Soldier Salute college wrestling tournament. This event brought 350 of the best men and women collegiate wrestlers from across the country together on the same floor wrestling at the same time.

A community that can do it all! We worked with the University of Iowa Aquatics department in hosting the Missouri Valley Conference Swimming and Diving Championships which were held at the CRWC, which welcomed the 8 colleges over 4 days in early March. A week later, Special Olympics came to town to host their Mid-Winter Tournament bringing over 1300 people to town for various competitions held in Iowa City and Coralville. All Iowa Attack, a youth basketball club held 19 tournaments in the IRL using the GreenState Family Fieldhouse, Xtream Arena and the Hyatt exhibit hall in 2022 bringing over 750 teams to our community. A brand-new cycling event was born; CORE4 is the blend of road, gravel and single track which started and ended at Wilson's Orchard. This event not only played on the strong cycling roots we already have in Johnson County but forged new inroads in the cycling community by creating a brand-new event that brings new and different type of cyclist to town further building on the Bike Iowa City brand.



As we close out 2022 and lookback at all the amazing events that came to town, we are reminded of the great people in our community that make them possible. Coralville/Iowa City Parks and Recreation staffs, Xtream Arena Staff, University of Iowa Rec Services, University of Iowa Aquatics, University of Iowa Athletic Department and facilities crew, Coralville and Iowa City Streets Department and all the hotels and restaurant staff who are on the front lines of greeting people to town. Lastly, the staff at Think Iowa City who certainly embraced "other duties as assigned" over the course of 2022.