



Members

Association of
Wisconsin Tourism
Attractions (AWTA)
Eric Knight

Destinations Wisconsin
Julia Hertel/Caty McDermott

Wisconsin Dells Visitor
& Convention Bureau
Jill Diehl

Wisconsin Hotel
& Lodging Association
Bill Elliott/Kathi Kilgore

Wisconsin Restaurant
Association (WRA)
Kristine Hillmer/Susan Quam

Associate Members

Create Wisconsin
Anne Katz

Golf Course Owners
Of Wisconsin
Jeff Schwister

National Federation of
Independent Business -
Wisconsin
Bill Smith

Outdoor Advertising
Association of Wisconsin
Kathi Kilgore

Wisconsin Fuel & Retail
Association
Matt Hauser

To: Wisconsin Legislators
Date: April 17, 2025
RE: Tourism 2025-27 Budget Requests

Wisconsin's tourism industry is a vital economic driver, fueling jobs, businesses, and local communities. As representatives of the state's tourism sector, we request targeted investments to strengthen Wisconsin's competitive edge, attract more visitors, and maximize economic returns. TFW urges continued funding in the following key areas to sustain this momentum.

1. **Tourism Marketing Funding**

As a top priority, TFW requests a **\$28 million GPR in FY '26 and \$5 million GPR in FY '27 for tourism marketing** in the Department of Tourism 2025-27 state budget. Effective Tourism promotion directly boosts visitor spending, job creation, and state and local tax revenue. It also enhances Wisconsin's brand for talent and business attraction. Increased tourism marketing funding over the past four years has helped Wisconsin improve its national ranking in visitor spending from 27th to 23rd. Continued investment is critical to keeping Wisconsin competitive.

2. **Office of Group Travel**

TFW supports continuing the Office of Group Travel and adding two staff members to expand Wisconsin's presence in meetings, sporting events, group tours and international travel. These business-to-business (B to B) marketing efforts are focused on sponsoring national and regional tradeshow and sales missions targeted to meetings, sports and group tour planners and are generating valuable leads for our local destination marketing organizations.

3. **Film Tax Incentives & Creative Industries Office**

TFW supports establishing film tax incentives and an Office of Film & Creative Industries to attract film and TV shows (*LRB 2456*). These projects generate immediate economic benefits and long-term tourism exposure.

4. **Office of Outdoor Recreation**

TFW supports permanent funding for the Office of Outdoor Recreation and its three staff positions. Outdoor recreation is a key economic driver and sustained investment ensures Wisconsin remains competitive.

Additional Tourism-Related Funding Items

- Continued funding for the Opportunity Attraction Fund to attract major, one-of-a-kind events to Wisconsin.
- Support for a \$1 million Rural Creative Economy grant program (*AB 159/SB 173*) to foster local economic growth.