



iTIP
Iowa Travel Industry Partners

Your Tourism Marketing Tool Box

*Working with Your Destination
Marketing Organization*

What is a destination marketing organization?

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) play a crucial role in helping tourism attractions by promoting not only the destination, but tourism attractions and visitor serving businesses such as events, lodging properties, restaurants, and retail stores. DMOs can also be seen as organizations that work as a Destination Management Organization helping attractions, hotels, restaurants, and retail know what is coming up for visitor business, passing on expectations for groups, and managing the workload of having events and groups in the destination. Lastly, DMOs can be seen as Destination Making Organizations for their leadership in helping the community imagine what the community can be in order to draw visitors as well as entertain its residents or by providing helpful insight into the destination's visitor experience.

DMOs are organized in multiple ways. They can be stand-alone organizations at a city or regional level, associated with a City or County government entity, or with an economic development organization like a Chamber. They can represent a community, county, region, or larger. No matter how they are organized, in the end all DMO's strive to bring visitors (and their dollars) to a geographic area to positively impact the local economy.



What do DMOS Do?

DMOs strive to help tourism attractions grow their audience, improve their offerings, and achieve long-term success in a competitive tourism landscape.

They coordinate the efforts of stakeholders to drive tourism development and implementation.

DMOs work to benefit their partners and destination in eight main areas:

1. Marketing and Promotion
2. Networking and Collaboration
3. Research and Data
4. Training and Development
5. Funding and Grant Opportunities
6. Digital Tools and Online Presence
7. Visitor Experience Enhancement
8. Crisis Management and Recovery



Marketing and Promotion

- **Campaigns and Advertising:** DMOs often lead out-of-region marketing campaigns to promote the community for visitation. A major component of that marketing is identifying tourism attractions and unique visitor experiences. These include advertising on social media, in print, and on websites, as well as creating video content, brochures, and graphics.
- **Branding:** DMOs assist in developing a destination tourism brand and positioning it in the market. Tourism attractions can benefit by being part of a well-coordinated destination brand that attracts visitors.
- **Media Relations:** DMOs can act as a connection to promote tourism attractions to other tourism entities, journalists, bloggers, and influencers who can feature them in articles, social media posts, and travel guides. Helpful hint: communicate with your DMO about your events, updates, news, important milestones, and press releases (before they go out to the public).
- **Out-of-Region Travel Shows:** DMOs may participate in public travel shows or niche recreational opportunities that showcase the community's tourism assets and the area as a destination for visitation. Often these shows are multiple days and long hours. DMOs need promotional materials to distribute and may utilize volunteers to assist at the shows. Volunteering to work in a show allows attractions to educate the public about their attractions and the community.
- **Images and Video:** DMOs need strong images and video to tell the community story. By providing professional grade resources to your DMO, there is a better chance your business is included in marketing initiatives. Or perhaps you need quality images and the DMO may be willing to provide them for you.



Networking and Collaboration

- **Communicate:** DMO staff only know what they know. Hours change? New staff in place? New Services? Tell your DMO *everything* that should be passed on to the visitors. Monitor DMO website listings to make sure information is accurate and updated.
- **Partnerships:** DMOs facilitate collaboration between local businesses, tourism operators, and attractions to create joint promotions or packages that can attract visitors.
- **Industry Events:** DMOs may organize or participate in tourism trade shows and events, giving tourism attractions an opportunity to showcase their offerings to motor coach tour operators, sports planners, meetings/conventions planners, and other key players in the industry.
- **Local Collaboration:** By connecting attractions with other stakeholders (hotels, restaurants, transportation services), DMOs help create an integrated tourism experience that benefits all participants.
- **Be Involved:** DMOs, like other organizations, have an opportunity for volunteerism whether in assisting planning and implementation of events, guiding tours, being part of a committee, or serving on a board. The best way to know what is happening within your destination specifically for tourism is to be involved with your DMO.

Research and Data

- **Visitor Analytics:** DMOs gather and provide valuable insights on visitor behavior, trends, demographics, and spending patterns, which can help attractions better understand their audience and plan targeted marketing strategies.
- **Market Intelligence:** DMOs can also provide data about competitor destinations and best practices, helping attractions refine their own offerings and remain competitive. DMO staff tend to travel to other destinations for meetings and can bring back many different types of resources, ideas, and solutions.
- **Economic Impact Calculations-** Events who want to tell their story in dollars and cents can reach out to DMOs to assist calculating its economic impact. DMOs usually need information like total attendance, the percentage of attendees from outside the events county, and the share of people requiring a hotel room due to the event to calculate the economic impact.

Training and Development

- **Capacity Building:** DMOs can organize workshops and training programs for tourism businesses and attractions, improving staff skills in areas such as customer service, digital marketing, sustainability, and storytelling.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** With growing emphasis on sustainable tourism, DMOs may provide guidance to attractions in developing more eco-friendly practices and help them gain certifications or recognition for responsible tourism.



Funding and Grant Opportunities

- **Access to Funding:** DMOs often have access to (or know how to access) government or private funding and can assist tourism attractions in securing grants or financial support for marketing, infrastructure development, or new projects.
- **Promotional Support:** DMOs may offer co-op funding for joint marketing efforts or cover part of the costs of advertising to help reduce the financial burden on attractions.

Digital Tools and Online Presence

- **Website Exposure:** DMOs maintain official tourism websites and listings that feature tourism attractions and visitor serving businesses. By being included in these listings, businesses gain visibility to potential visitors.
- **Event Calendars:** DMOs maintain a community event calendar. This calendar is not only marketed to visitors but can also assist in event planning and date selection. If organizations want to decrease the likeliness of their event being scheduled during a time with other events, contact your DMO *before* you set the date and *again* once you have set it.
- **Social Media Promotion:** DMOs can leverage their social media platforms to promote specific attractions, share visitor testimonials, and create buzz around seasonal events or new attractions.
- **Content Creation:** DMOs can assist in creating engaging content (e.g., blog posts, videos) that highlight attractions, helping them reach a broader audience.

Visitor Experience Enhancement

- **Information Centers:** DMOs often operate visitor information centers that can help promote local attractions and other visitor serving businesses by providing tourists with maps, brochures, and personalized recommendations.
- **Event Coordination:** DMOs may assist attractions in hosting and promoting events (festivals, exhibitions, etc.), which can increase foot traffic and bring in new audiences.

Crisis Management and Recovery

- **Crisis Communication:** In times of crisis (e.g., natural disasters, pandemics), DMOs provide support by communicating with visitors, offering up-to-date information, and assisting attractions in navigating the recovery process.
- **Rebuilding Efforts:** DMOs can help tourism attractions rebuild and recover by re-engaging visitors, creating special promotions, and rebuilding the destination's reputation.