

UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

September 7, 2022

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

In response to your request for the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (TTAB) to compose a set of recommendations on how the federal government can better support the development of diverse tourism products and experiences across the United States as it relates to the travel and tourism industry, it is our pleasure to submit the following recommendations outlined below. In developing these recommendations, TTAB established that the proposed recommendations should align with the 2022 National Travel & Tourism Strategy's Pillars, consider Brand USA's Multicultural Multiplier: Cultural Diversity Study, and UNWTO's definition of tour product development (see Appendix).

The topic of diverse tourism products and experiences is very vast. To help formulate recommendations, TTAB consulted with a broad representation of industry stakeholders with direct connections to diverse tourism products and experiences. Guest speakers included representatives from Brand USA; federal agencies such as NOAA and the National Park Service; small scale and global tour operators of diverse tourism products and experiences; travel advisors; destination marketing organizations; and organizations representing the LGBTQ and African American communities.

Certain destinations attract more visitors than others, with a variety of factors – from accessibility to popularity – contributing to the disparity. Protecting, restoring, and developing a broader array of tourism assets, both recreational and cultural, leads visitors to an expanded range of locales and experiences, and relieves crowding at the most visited sites. Furthermore, many underserved rural and urban communities within gateway destinations, outside of national parks, and alongside waterways have not been extended equitable opportunities to participate and profit in local tourism ecosystems.

Apart from Native American tribal communities, federal agencies have not fully engaged and supported other local communities comprised of Black Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics in their efforts to boost their travel and tourism economies. These local communities need assistance balancing tourism opportunities with the need for affordable housing, living-wage jobs, and resource preservation. In addition, these communities have experienced economic decline and seek help exploring tourism and outdoor recreation as tools to diversify and expand their economies.

As stated in the 2022 National Travel & Tourism Strategy, supporting local communities' planning and preparation for the future will help balance their needs and they will benefit from

the growing interest in tourism. Involving underserved populations in local planning is essential to advancing equity and environmental justice, consistent with President Biden’s Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government (EO 13985). Also, as more communities embrace sustainable tourism; the federal government can help them connect those principles with broader community development goals. Together, federal, state, local, and tribal governments can collaborate with the private sector to address visitor use management in sensitive areas and support tourism strategies that divert visitors from overutilized areas and attract new visitors to local points of interest.

Below, are the proposed recommendations for Diverse Tourism Products and Experiences (DTPE).

Recommendation: Assign responsibility to a newly formed Office of Diverse Tourism Products & Experiences within the Commerce Department for ensuring ongoing planning and implementation for the federal government’s investment in diverse tourism products and experiences. This could also be carried out as part of TTAB’s charge or through a new advisory committee formed for this purpose.

- Activities may include establishing industry guidelines, conducting assessments of public/private partnerships, marketing, research, and social impact generated through diverse tourism products and experiences for underserved small-scale providers and communities.
- Support Brand USA’s inclusion of DTPE’s in its marketing efforts as it relates to the National Travel and Tourism Strategy.
- Support inclusion of small scale BIPOC providers, sustainable or regenerative tourism operators, and other non-traditional travel and tourism providers on relevant federal advisory boards and committees.
- Support development of public/private partnerships to match federal funding with corporate investments for economic development, marketing, and product development. Corporate initiatives such as Airbnb’s Entrepreneurship Academy – a flexible and interactive education program focused on introducing diverse communities to hosting, and the American Express member reward program which provides diverse tourism experiences for cardholders are examples of tourism-focused corporate programs that amplify diverse tourism products and experiences.
- Partner with Online Travel Agents (OTAs) such as Expedia, Fareportal and Trip Advisor/Viator for marketing inclusion and amplification of small scale diverse tour products and accommodations.

Recommendation: Establish industry-wide guidelines for defining diverse tourism products and experiences in the U.S., using the National Travel and Tourism Strategy and the UNWTO’s definition for tourism products as a framework.

- Through a new Office of Diverse Tourism Products & Experiences or federal advisory committee, create a comprehensive definition for diverse tourism products and experiences in the U.S. using the National Travel and Tourism Strategy and the UNWTO’s definition of tourism products as a framework to ensure that diverse tourism products and experiences:

- i. Encompass people, products and places;
 - ii. Represent diversity in at least two of the following areas: demographically, geographically, or subject matter;
 - iii. Are combinations of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural, and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services, and activities;
 - iv. Are priced and sold through domestic and international distribution channels; and
 - v. Create an overall world-class visitor experience, including transformational aspects for customers.
- Use the DTPE defining guidelines as criteria to evaluate various funding opportunities with the goal of supporting underserved communities and populations and supporting destinations as they expand their tourism economies through a sustainable and equitable approach.
 - Support industry efforts in using the definition as a standard for enhancing existing diverse product and experiences, as well as developing new diverse products and experiences. This will help achieve objectives of fostering resilient and sustainable travel and tourism by supporting small scale providers and tour operators in lesser-known destinations and underserved communities.

Recommendation: Establish partnerships among government, industry, and private sector to conduct new research and compile existing information to gain data on consumer interests and existing consumption of diverse tourism products and experiences.

- Leverage research sponsored by Brand USA and others to gain data and insights on diverse tourism products and experiences as this relates to the international visitor.
- Support funding for the initiation of additional research to assess DTPEs currently available and marketed by U.S. destinations and Brand USA and consumed by international visitors.
- Work with the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis and Census Bureau to gather available domestic travel data related to DTPE.
- Support private sector research to determine the economic impact of tourism in underserved communities and for small-scale providers prior to pandemic and over the past two years.
- Collaborate with related agencies managing federal lands and waterways to assess current activity to foster and develop sustainable travel, visitation to lesser-known places, offer/develop diverse tourism offerings, and support tourism businesses from underserved communities.
- Encourage related federal agencies to fund state and local initiatives when identifying under-visited locations through data analysis, enlisting local communities (people and places) in planning for their own tourism growth; and marketing their success as tourism destinations.

Recommendation: Ensure small scale providers of diverse tourism products and experiences from economically underserved communities are included in marketing to domestic and international audiences and have access to tourism-specific technical assistance.

- Convene the Tourism Policy Council to investigate ways to ensure that creating “economic and equitable opportunities” for small scale providers and underserved communities is a priority and requirement for applying for any future federal funding made available through grant applications submitted by 501(c)3 non-profit, tribal, local, regional, or state tourism-related organizations across all federal agencies.
- Stipulate that new funding made available to support enhancing existing and developing new diverse tourism products and experiences must include marketing dollars committed to promoting DTPE within underserved communities and amplifying small scale minority providers of DTPE.
- Support funding for destinations to build capacity for localities to leverage and grow under-visited travel and tourism assets, especially for underserved communities and populations.
- Support direct funding to build capacity and scale the work of existing nonprofit tourism organizations already providing technical assistance to small scale providers and tour operators in economically underserved communities, and to fund new organizations where capacity does not currently exist. Organizations such as American Indian Alaskan Native Tourism Association and National Blacks in Travel & Tourism Collaborative are prominent examples of tourism-focused nonprofits already working with small scale providers from economically underserved communities that deliver authentic cultural heritage products and experiences. These organizations help to broaden inclusion, equity and diversity in the US travel and tourism industry.

The implementation of these recommendations will help establish standards for developing diverse tourism products and experiences, create equitable opportunity for small scale providers from underserved communities by enhancing local tourism economies, and create world-class diverse tourism products and experiences for destinations to promote and sell to attract international visitors seeking a broader narrative of our diverse American story. Thank you for this opportunity to share our recommendations in support of President Biden’s commitment to ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion within America’s travel and tourism industry.

Respectfully submitted,



Bill Hornbuckle
Chair

Brad Dean
Vice Chair

APPENDIX

Recommendations Support 2022 National Travel & Tourism Strategy

The recommendations support a pivotal goal of the National Travel & Tourism Strategy's Pillar #3, Ensuring Diverse, Inclusive, and Accessible Tourism Experiences which states the following priorities:

- To extend the benefits of travel and tourism by supporting the development of diverse tourism products, focusing on underserved communities and populations.
- Address the financial and workplace needs of travel and tourism businesses, supporting destination communities as they expand their tourism economies.
- Deliver world-class experiences and customer service on federal lands and waters that showcase U.S. assets while protecting them for future generations.

Brand USA Multicultural Multiplier Study Supports Recommendations

In July 2022, Brand USA in partnership with Miles Partnership and Destinations International released the results of a Multicultural Multiplier: Cultural Diversity's Impact on Travel Intent Study which validated the following in support of diverse tourism products and experiences:

- The results reaffirmed Brand USA's belief that there is an appetite for interesting and eclectic experiences that showcase diverse, local experiences
- The markers of a culturally curious traveler are experienced and affluent traveler, repeat visitor to the U.S., generally from a mature market
- In mature travel markets, there is a significant multicultural multiplier (average spend per person, per night). In Canadian and U.K. markets, it represents an increase of 26% and 14%, respectively

In lieu of these findings, Brand USA plans to share these results with its destination marketing organizations partners to encourage them to identify diverse stakeholders and create multicultural products / experiences. In addition, they will work with travel trade, earned media and influencers to highlight the results of the study and continue to promote multicultural experiences in the U.S.

UNWTO Definition of Tour Product Development

As defined by UNWTO, a Tourism Product is "a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific center of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels and it has a life-cycle".