

## UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

June 3, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

On behalf of the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, we thank you for the opportunity to provide recommendations that will support the nation's standing as a premier destination for international sporting events. We recommend a comprehensive approach to leveraging sporting events as a catalyst for tourism promotion and destination enhancement.

Large international sporting events have become increasingly important to the travel and tourism industry, serving as major drivers of economic growth, cultural exchange, and global visibility for host destinations. In the coming years, the U.S. will host several large international sporting events, including the 2026 FIFA World Cup, 2028 Olympic and Summer Games, two Rugby World Cups, and Formula One races around the country. These events attract millions of spectators, participants, and media from around the world, creating a significant impact on local economies and communities. For example, FIFA estimates each host city could see approximately \$160 to \$620 million in economic activity.

The appeal of hosting such events extends beyond the immediate economic benefits, as they provide a unique opportunity to highlight a destination's hospitality, as well as its natural and cultural richness to a global audience. Moreover, these events often leave a lasting legacy, contributing to the development of sports facilities, transportation networks, and tourism infrastructure that benefit the host destination long after the event has concluded.

Ensuring the seamless execution of such large international sporting events in the U.S. in the next several years demonstrates the urgency of filling the position of Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism. These events require meticulous planning, cross-departmental coordination, and strategic policy implementation, which can only be effectively overseen by a dedicated leader with deep expertise.

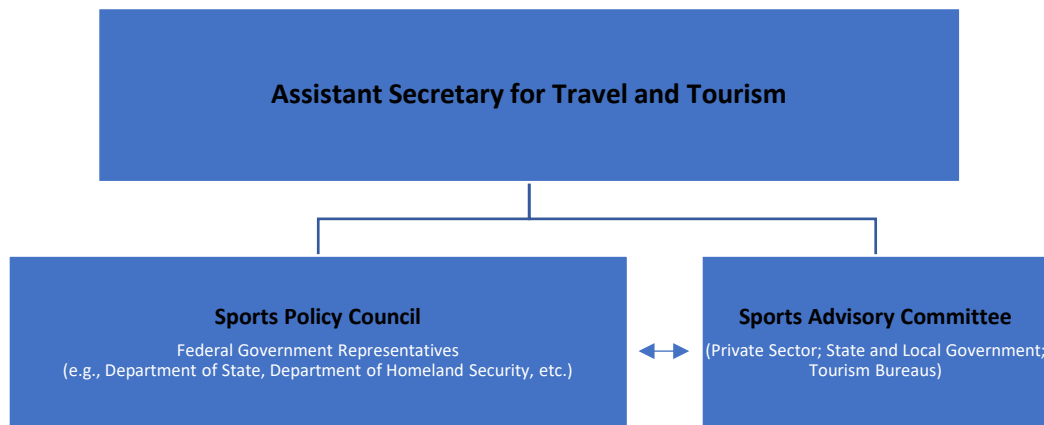
The responsibility of managing international sporting events currently falls under the purview of the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Travel and Tourism Office and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs – Sports Diplomacy. As the prominence of such events continues to grow, it is crucial for the United States to adopt a more holistic and strategic approach that involves all facets of government and members of the host community. The approach should leverage the expertise of the Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism to showcase the importance of such events on a global scale. By coordinating

efforts and providing a unified strategy, the Assistant Secretary will ensure resources are efficiently allocated, policies are effectively executed, and challenges are promptly addressed.

The strategy should encompass the entire event lifecycle, from pre-planning to post-event evaluation, and involve collaboration between the federal, state, local governments, port authorities, the private sector, and local communities to ensure a comprehensive and sustainable impact. We offer the following recommendations in support of this goal:

**Recommendation #1: Establishment of Sports-focused Government Entities**

Similar to the Tourism Policy Council, Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, and National Travel and Tourism Office, the federal government should consider establishing government entities focused on maximizing the impact of sports on our national economy. The Sports Policy Council would set strategic priorities and coordinate efforts across federal government agencies and the Sports Advisory Committee would provide specific advice, guidance, and support from the private sector and localities. The office of the Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism would work with the Sports Policy Council and Sports Advisory Committee to streamline the planning and execution of sporting events while ensuring funding and resources are efficiently allocated and best practices followed.



- *Sports Policy Council:* Many countries around the world have established sports ministries to strategically manage sports-related activities and maximize their benefits. Understanding that creating a sports ministry in the United States may face its challenges, we recommend creating the council to serve as a central authority responsible for coordinating efforts across various federal government agencies, including coordination with the Department of State’s Office of Sports Diplomacy. The council would serve as a federal interagency committee chaired by the Secretary of Commerce.
- *Sports Advisory Committee:* We recommend establishing a Sports Advisory Committee that includes representatives from the private sector and local communities to provide support and recommendations on sporting events in the United States and how we may maximize its positive effects to local economies.

Such diverse perspectives and expertise can play a pivotal role elevating sports in tourism and can effectively coordinate with stakeholders, monitor the impact of sporting events on tourism promotion and destination enhancement, and identify areas for improvement.

The establishment of a Sports Policy Council and a Sports Advisory Committee would demonstrate a commitment to sports diplomacy and excellence and bring the United States in line with many other countries that have recognized the importance of sports in promoting tourism, fostering community engagement, and driving economic development.

Strategies such entities may employ include:

*Amplification of Travel and Tourism:* The Sports Policy Council and Sports Advisory Committee should focus on marketing efforts not only for the event, but also for regional visitation and extended stays to other destinations within the U.S. Strategies include partnering with Brand USA, increasing digital promotion and engagement, engaging the local community, and enlisting American ambassadors and influencers to assist with promotion.

*Collaboration with Stakeholders:* Collaborate with various stakeholders to ensure a successful event for all involved.

- Collaborate with state, local, and tribal communities to bid for international sporting events. This includes investing in infrastructure to ensure transportation, accommodations, public facilities, visa and entry processes, and local businesses are prepared to handle the influx of visitors.
- Collaborate with community stakeholders, prioritizing community outreach and communication to ensure that all members of the community are engaged and included in the event. Sporting events present a unique opportunity to showcase the rich diversity of the United States and ensure that all communities, including underserved populations and those differently abled, can participate in and benefit from these events. Collaborating with local communities is essential to showcase their unique culture, cuisine, and attractions, providing visitors with a truly immersive experience.
  - Provide accessibility options for those differently abled, such as wheelchair ramps, accessible seating, and sign language interpretation. By actively engaging with diverse communities and ensuring their representation in sporting events, destinations can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all visitors, leaving a lasting positive impact on both the event and the host destination.
  - Use sporting events to fully represent the diversity of the United States, ensuring that all communities and underserved populations can participate in the benefits of these events.
  - Ensure small and diverse businesses are actively involved as partners in the event, promoting economic development and inclusivity.
- Proactive outreach to sports leagues and governing bodies to highlight U.S. capabilities and developing a post-event strategy to capitalize on increased visitation and encourage longer stays.

## **Recommendation #2: Creation of an Event Playbook**

Outline best practices drawn from various successful events, such as the Super Bowl. This playbook should include strategies for amplifying travel and tourism around international sporting events in the United States and shall serve as a comprehensive guidebook for organizers of large sporting events, providing them with a roadmap for successful planning and execution. The playbook may provide detailed guidelines for collaborating with stakeholders at the federal, state, and local government levels, as well as the private sector, ensuring that organizers know who to work with and how to navigate the complex landscape of event planning.

In addition to serving as a guide for event organizers, the Event Playbook can also be utilized as a marketing tool to attract organizers considering hosting an event in the United States. By highlighting the successful strategies and practices outlined in the playbook, organizers can see the benefits of hosting their event in the U.S. and the support they can expect from government and private sector partners. This can help attract a wider range of events to the United States, while further enhancing its reputation as a premier destination for international sporting events.

Overall, the Event Playbook may serve as a valuable resource, providing tools and information needed to plan and execute successful sporting events that showcases the diversity of the host destination while also serving as a driver for tourism and economic growth.

In conclusion, by implementing these recommendations, the United States can harness the full potential of sporting events as powerful drivers of tourism, community engagement, and economic development. Sporting events have the ability to attract a diverse range of visitors, from sports enthusiasts and spectators to media representatives and sponsors, creating a significant boost in tourism activity that stimulates the local economy through spending on accommodations, dining, and transportation while also generating revenue for local businesses and communities.

Communities hosting large sporting events can receive lasting benefits, such as improved infrastructure, enhanced facilities, and increased international visibility, leaving a lasting legacy that benefits the host destination for years to come.

In embracing these recommendations, destinations can leverage sporting events as more than just entertainment but as catalysts for positive change, driving tourism growth, fostering community engagement, and stimulating economic development.

Respectfully submitted,



Bill Hornbuckle  
Chair



Brad Dean  
Vice Chair