



Chicago Southland Convention & Visitors Bureau Destination Recovery Plan

While there are many unknowns in the COVID-19 pandemic, we must do our best to create a recovery plan and use our resources wisely to benefit the Chicago Southland.

Recovery Goals

- Preserve professional staff to maintain relationships with planners, travel trade and stakeholders
- Maintain our cash reserves for future sales and marketing efforts
- Communicate with our clientele, tourism partners and elected officials

Timeline

Phase 1

When Illinois issued its stay at home orders, the CSCVB focused on maintaining safety while helping hospitality businesses. We communicated with our audiences about what services and amenities were still open. All advertising programs were halted and for those programs that could not be halted, messaging was adapted to the situation (When You're Ready, We're Here).

A Chicago Southland COVID-19 Update e-mail was created and sent weekly to our tourism partners and stakeholders containing information such as state grant and loan programs, important links and requests for various blog posts. Staff has worked with local partners and government officials to address hospitality needs and concerns, including securing hotel rooms for first responders and will continue to do so if necessary.

Phase 2

The CSCVB continued to maintain safety while working to gather information from planners on current situations, future concerns and working to postpone when possible instead of cancelling. We continued our messaging of "When You're Ready, We're Here" through social media posts, videos, phone calls and e-mail correspondence.

The CSCVB continued to promote members and amenities through blog posts including, but not limited to, take out options, celebrating holidays (Easter and Mother's Day), Chicago Southland Bingo and outdoor activities while social distancing. A weekly COVID-19 email continued to be sent to our tourism partners and stakeholders. Staff also continued to work with local entities to address hospitality concerns.

Phase 3

We continued to communicate to all audiences and expanded communications.

- **Residents** – Residents began to feel comfortable and traveled within their municipality, and then within the Chicago Southland region. Residents also became comfortable with welcoming visitors to their town.
- **Potential Visitors** – Potential regional visitors and beyond began to feel safe about travelling and the destinations they visit.
- **Tourism Partners** – Partners continued to require accurate information to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

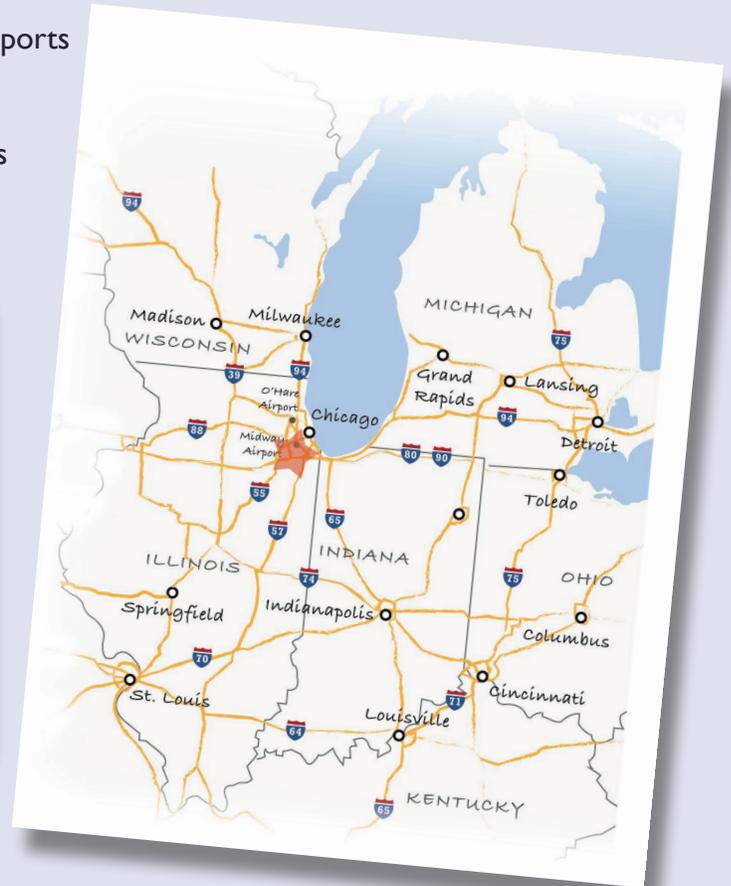
Phase 4

We will continue to encourage residents to be tourists in their own town by patronizing local establishments and experiencing the local activities. We will continue to keep our tourism partners informed with regular communications such as weekly email updates. We will begin to expand communications and our reach to regional potential visitors and will continue to do so when appropriate. Sales staff will reach out to clients who fit within the 50 people restriction.

Goals and Tactics: Sales

Goals

- Recover 2020 canceled meetings, group tours and sports events and reschedule to new dates
- Focus on Q4 2020, 2021 and beyond for meetings, group tours and sports traveling from a 5-hour radius (encompassing eight states)



Tactics

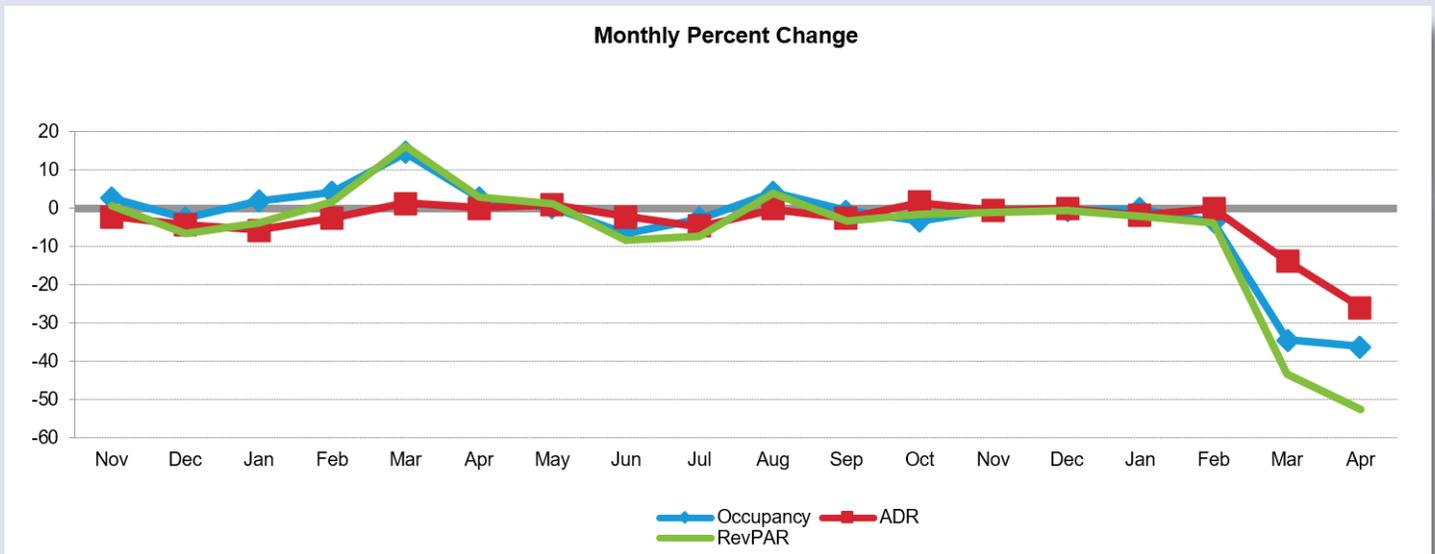
- Attend all rescheduled **tradeshows** in FY2021
- Canvas hotels for special group tour **rates and promotions**
- Contact **parks** departments and **sports** venues in the Chicago Southland to organize and unify sports facility use
- Contact **tour operators** with 2020 bookings – monitor date changes and assist with rebooking
- Continue all forms of **sales activities** when markets dictate that clients are looking to source future events
- Continue to conduct a contact audit/update on the CSCVB CRM's **5,320+** active contacts (all markets)
- Continue to conduct an account audit/update on the CSCVB CRM's **1,960+** active accounts (all markets)
- Continue to create new **prospecting lists** for future sales efforts
- Continue to offer extensive **incentives** and the **local marketing grant** (when applicable) to new clients
- Continue to participate in all applicable industry **webinars**
- Continue to respond to **CVENT** requests
- Continue to work **outstanding leads** prior to COVID-19
- Discover a localized **sports market opportunity** within our existing facilities and gauge interest in a local tournament with a regional draw
- Foster collaboration among hoteliers to provide **discounted rates** and/or **flexible contract terms** to offer for new meetings/programs
- Investigate **hosting webinars** for clients (hotel presentations, local grant workshop, Chicago Southland region)
- Send **client e-communicues** with regional information and hotel information (safety procedures, promos, state updates, etc.)
- When groups can meet again (per the **State of Illinois guidelines and phases**) in the Chicago Southland region, focus will be on those group sizes across all markets

Measurements

- Book/re-book I **group tour overnight trip** to the Chicago Southland region in 2020 or Q1-Q2 2021
- Book/re-book I **meeting/program** in the Chicago Southland region in 2020 or Q1-Q2 2021
- Book/re-book I **sports tournament** in the Chicago Southland region in 2020 or Q1-Q2 2021
- Conduct client **Zoom** appointments educating clients on the Chicago Southland's **meetings facilities**
- Conduct client **Zoom** appointments educating clients on the Chicago Southland's **sports venues**
- Conduct client **Zoom** appointments educating clients on the Chicago Southland's **group tour amenities**
- Conduct **virtual site inspections** with group tour clients of hotels, attractions and restaurants (when non-essential businesses open)
- Conduct **virtual site inspections** with meetings client of hotels and additional meeting facilities (when non-essential businesses open)
- Conduct **virtual site inspections** with sports clients of sports venues and park districts (when non-essential businesses open)

Once groups can meet again in the Chicago Southland region, focus will be on group sizes of all markets approved by the State of Illinois's recovery phases for gatherings (10ppl, 50ppl, etc.).

Current Chicago Southland Region Smith Travel Research Information (Hotel Occupancy, ADR and RevPAR)



Source: STR Report

Goals and Tactics: Marketing/Communications

Goals

- Increase brand awareness
- Drive traffic to our website
- Increase engagement on social media
- Reinstate and expand reach of leisure e-newsletter
- Reinstate Visitors Guide distribution in IL, IN, WI and MI

Tactics

- **Resume halted advertising** (banner ads and e-blasts) with meeting, groups tour and sports organizations with the “**When You’re Ready, We’re Here**” messaging when deemed appropriate
- Resume **Google AdWords** (Search Engine Marketing) first within a 50-mile radius, then to a 100-mile radius and expand to a 5-hour radius (encompassing eight states) when the Northeast Region of Illinois achieves Phase 5 status
- Continue to develop and implement the **Chicago Southland To a T campaign** – this campaign markets a set of activities to leisure visitors enticing them to plan a Chicago Southland getaway; a landing page will be created and be promoted through a blog post, social media posting and Google AdWords; the landing page will allow visitors to choose which activity to explore further by guiding them to the corresponding section on our website
- Continue to create content on the **VisitChicagoSouthland.com** website including blog posts, summer staycation specials, group tour specials, Chicago Southland To a T landing page, etc.
- Continue to post **content relative to planners** including “When You’re Ready, We’re Here” videos and activities and specials to locals including the new trails app, Chicago Southland To a T campaign and summer staycation specials
- Develop **flyers and graphics** as needed to communicate specials and safety precautions
- Reinstate the **leisure e-newsletter** and engage subscribers with new content including summer staycation specials, Chicago Southland To a T, trails app, Chicago Southland App, etc.
- Proactively pitch **media outlets** with story ideas and newly created tools for visitors
- When appropriate, resume **brochure distribution** throughout visitor centers in IL, IN, WI and MI
- Work with Illinois CVBs to create a weekly blog post, **Illinois Road Trip Round-Up**, directed towards the drive market focused on themes such as farmers markets, golf, railfanning, etc.



Measurements

- **Increase traffic** to our website by 20% over Phase 2, as well as monitor top pages and app activity, with the goal of reaching pre-pandemic levels
- **Increase engagement** on social media with the goal of reaching pre-pandemic levels
- **Increase e-newsletter subscribers** by 10% and obtain a 25-30% open rate



Goals and Tactics: Visitor Services

Goals

- Enhance the visitor experience through distribution of printed materials and available travel tools, hotel specials and apps to extend current visits and encourage repeat visits

Tactics

- **Re-open** Chicago Southland Lincoln Oasis Visitor Information Center

Measurements

- **Increase brochure distribution** and restore to pre-pandemic levels
- **Increase visitors assisted** and restore to pre-pandemic levels



Goals and Tactics: Industry & Community Relations

Goals

- Continue to solidify relationships with tourism partners, board members, elected officials and community leaders and continue to expand awareness of the Chicago Southland CVB as an industry leader and marketer

Tactics

- Continue weekly **COVID-19 Update email**
- President/CEO will continue to communicate with **elected officials** on issues and programming
- When possible, conduct a **Front Line Training workshop** to educate frontline staff on recommended safety procedures, new tourism tools and customer attentiveness

Measurements

- **Increase engagement** with tourism partners
- **Increase engagement** with elected officials and local leaders



Tourism Partner's Call to Action

- Provide CSCVB official **safety procedures** and **opening timelines**
- Provide CSCVB group market specific **incentives, special offers, flexible terms**, etc.
- Provide CSCVB any new **specials** or **programs**, as well as **videos**, for social media posing
- Provide CSCVB **Staycation Specials**
- Provide CSCVB with **online coupons** to post on VisitChicagoSouthland.com
- Participate in **blog posts** by submitting requested info when applicable
- Provide updated **print material** to place at the Chicago Southland Visitor Information Center
- Attend **Front Line Training workshop** when offered