



# 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## Schedule

### **Tuesday, September 2nd**

- 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Women’s Conference Registration
- 11:00 a.m. – 4:45 p.m. Women’s Conference – Day 1
- 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. TACVB Board Meeting
- 6:00 p.m. TACVB Board Dinner *(by invite only)*
- 5:50 p.m. **Women’s Conference Reception sponsored by Visit Houston** at *Wines from a Broad*, featuring wine and charcuterie

### **Wednesday, September 3rd**

- 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Women’s Conference – Day 2
- 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Partner Hall Load-In
- 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Registration/Badge pickup
- Pre-Conference Tours and Sessions (optional add-on sessions):*
- 8:50 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. *Destination Tour – Cowtown Cycle Tours*
- 9:00 a.m. – noon *Destination Marketing Principles*
- 11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. First Time Attendee Luncheon sponsored by Yodel *(by invite only)*
- Noon – 1:00 p.m. Partner Hall Open
- 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Welcome to the 2025 TACVB Annual Conference!**  
**OPENING KEYNOTE – Mitch Mitchem**

### **No More Fluff: Making AI Work Inside Your Business Now**

The cost of knowledge is now ZERO. Are you ready? The Chinese now mandate all their students, starting at 6 years old, learn to use the tools of AI. Are you this focused?

This isn’t a futurist fantasy or a tech demo. It’s a live, zero-fluff breakdown of how AI is already reshaping destination marketing and visitor engagement, and exactly how your organization can

stop spectating and start executing. With over 40,000 people trained on the right way to use AI, Mitch Mitchem delivers a practical, high-impact roadmap for you to deploy AI with clarity, confidence, and control.

You'll walk away with:

- The truth about BYOAI vs. Enterprise AI (and why most of your team is using AI off the books)
- Tactical use cases, from sales follow-up to stakeholder alignment, that create ROI in weeks, not years
- A new framework for human-centered AI that amplifies local connection, not just automation

This is AI without the hype. Designed for leaders ready to move.

*Presented by Mitch Mitchem, CEO HIVE*

2:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.	Break & Partner Hall
<b>2:45 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Destination Celebration: A New Era for TACVB Including the First Look at Our New Name &amp; Brand and the Texas Tourism Awards Presentation</b>
4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.	<b>Young Professionals Reception <i>sponsored by Tempest, Destination Bryan and Visit South Padre Island.</i></b>
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.	<b>Opening Reception at Tannahills Tavern &amp; Music Hall <i>sponsored by Visit Fort Worth</i></b> featuring a bring-your-own leather branding activation. Boots encouraged! ( <i>Transportation from the hotel will be provided starting at 5:30 p.m. in the hotel lobby</i> )
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.	Big DMO Dinner ( <i>by invite only</i> )

#### **Thursday, September 4th**

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Registration/badge pick up
8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.	Breakfast <i>presented by Visit Waco</i>
8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Morning Remarks
<b>9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.</b>	<b>MORNING KEYNOTE – Amir Eylon, Longwoods International</b>

#### **So What?: A Look at American Travel Sentiment and Trends**

Join Amir Eylon as he presents not only a pulse check on American travelers and their sentiment, but *information as to what to do about it!* This engaging presentation from the head of this premier market research agencies will examine what travelers are thinking using the most up to date research from the American Travel Sentiment tracker, as well as how they are behaving using insights from Travel USA (the largest and longest ongoing study of traveling Americans), and how TACVB members may use this information to their advantage. Amir's energetic storytelling and sense of humor will not be just a bunch of data points on a slide!

Key Takeaways for attendees:

1. The latest research as to what American travelers are thinking and behaving
2. The latest and most important trends emerging as a result of this sentiment and behavior.
3. Actionable insights as to what to do about it!

*Presented by Amir Eylon, President & CEO of Longwoods International*

9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.      Break & Partner Hall

**10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.      BREAK OUT SESSIONS**

**Maximizing Marketing Impact: Lessons in Attribution from Diverse Tourism Verticals**

Join us for an inspiring session on working smarter—discover essential shifts that can enhance your marketing results for your team and stakeholders. We will explore three unique use cases in the tourism sector, showcasing the transformative power of Tourism Economics' Media Impact Calculator and Website Impact Calculator. Gain valuable insights and strategies to optimize your marketing returns.

- **Driving Tourism with Data:** Discover how a major publisher used content and analytics to increase engagement for a key tourism destination.
- **Agency Innovation with Third-Party Attribution:** Why is a marketing agency using 3rd party data to validate and elevate DMO results—no grading their own homework here.
- **Turning Viral Buzz into ROI:** Uncover how one DMO tied a viral video to real visitation and website traffic, proving marketing value for their community with data.

*Presented by Zeek Coleman, Vice President Americas and Chuck Davison, Vice President Attribution Solutions, Tourism Economics*

**From Lens to Launch: Photography & Creative Branding for Destination Impact**

Great content doesn't stop at the click of a shutter—it's just the beginning. This session blends photography fundamentals with accessible design strategies to help destination professionals create powerful storytelling content. In this session, you'll learn:

- **Photography Essentials:** How to capture compelling images using lighting, composition, and perspective—even with a smartphone.
- **Short-form Video Basics:** create engaging, quick-turn video content using your photos and clips—perfect for Reels, TikToks, and Stories.
- **Creative Branding in Canva:** Turn your images into eye-catching social media graphics, stakeholder features, and marketing assets—no design background required.

Whether you're a one-person team or part of a larger DMO, this session will equip you with practical tools to elevate your content, tell your destination's story with intention, and create value for your local partners and stakeholders.

*Presented by Lindsay Closson, Director of Marketing and Membership, TACVB and Jasmyne Harris Communications & Creative Manager, AJR Media*

**Hiring Smart, Managing Strong: HR Strategies for Building and Sustaining a High-Performing Team** *(panel discussion)*

Successful organizations start with the right people in the right roles—but it doesn't stop there. In this session, you'll learn proven hiring strategies to attract top talent, align candidates with organizational culture, and make confident, informed decisions during the recruitment process.

We'll also dive into the challenges that can arise after onboarding, including how to recognize, address, and manage problem employees constructively. Whether you're growing your team or refining your current workforce, this session offers actionable tools and insights to build a stronger, more resilient organization from the inside out.

*Moderated by Meg Winchester, Vice President, Fired Up! Culture*

*Panelists: Maura Gast, Executive Director, Irving CVB, Jennifer Johnson, Vice President of People and Culture, Visit Dallas*

**Authentic Intelligence: How to use AI for your destination and not lose your soul** *(panel discussion)*

Providing perspective to DMOs of every size on the importance of embracing and harnessing the power of AI in their branding, beyond the obvious efficiencies, data and analysis. Our industry has an unprecedented opportunity to collaborate with these tools to enhance strategy, creativity, and emotional connection in our storytelling -- all while maintaining our destinations' authentic identity, personality and voice. Let's explore the possibilities of pairing human truths with superhuman capabilities.

*Moderated by Paul Whitbeck, CEO, Greenhaus*

*Panelists: Casey Soulies, Chief Media Officer, Greenhaus; Chris Brown, Chief Strategy Officer, Greenhaus; Jennifer Walker, CMO, Visit Dallas; and Kachet Jackson Bell, Founder, KJBCollective*

10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.      Break & Partner Hall

11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.      **BREAK OUT SESSIONS**

**Talk Budget to Me: Defending Dollars, Demonstrating Impact** *(panel discussion)*

Get ready for a candid conversation with destination CEOs who know what it takes to build, defend, and communicate the value of a tourism budget. In this dynamic panel session, leaders will share real-world experiences presenting to city councils, responding to tough questions, and justifying investments in destination marketing and operations.

You'll hear how they prepare for high-stakes budget conversations, align their messaging with city priorities, and prove ROI in ways that resonate with elected officials and stakeholders. Whether you're a CEO, senior staff member, or aspiring leader, this session will equip you with insights and talking points to confidently advocate for your destination's funding and future.

*Moderated by Scott Joslove, President & CEO, THLA, Panelists TBA*

**Set Jetting: Tourism's Biggest Trend is Texas's Greatest Opportunity** *(panel discussion)*

Set Jetting (travel inspired by film and TV) is one of the fastest-growing trends in tourism. As we enter the golden era of Texas Film, Visit Fort Worth is taking full advantage by converting viewers to visitors.

Discover how Visit Fort Worth has developed a comprehensive marketing strategy centered on Texas Film. Visit Fort Worth's recent campaign retargeted viewers of Taylor Sheridan's series,

Landman, successfully generating hotel bookings from across the US.

Learn what is next for Visit Fort Worth and what advice they have for you to take advantage of the massive Set-Jetting opportunities in Texas.

*Moderated by Taylor McGurk, Adara*

*Panelists: Taylor Hardy, Film Commissioner, Visit Fort Worth, and Sydney Patterson, Marketing Manager, Visit Fort Worth*

### **Real Talk: Big Questions Facing Tourism Marketing** *(panel discussion)*

What's changing, and what's actually working, in tourism marketing today? In this candid roundtable, three DMO leaders share how they are using data to guide decisions, how they're responding to shifts in Google search visibility, and what new strategies they are experimenting with this year. Whether you're rethinking your media mix or just trying to keep up with constant change, this session will offer grounded insights and inspiration from the front lines.

*Moderated by Lauren Wegmann, Vice President of Digital Media Solutions, AJR Media Group*

*Panelists: Pam King, Tourism Manager, Destination Dripping Springs; Bailey Armendarez, Director of Marketing and Communications, Visit Lubbock; Malinalli Montesam, Assistant Director, City of Brownsville, Brownsville Convention & Visitors Bureau*

### **Hacking the Algorithm: The Power of Community Level Storytelling in Destination PR**

In an era of AI-driven content, human-centric community narratives are the new PR gold. This session explores how to move beyond typical developments and asset-based promotion to unearth the soul of a destination through compelling, human stories that AI can't replicate (...yet). Learn to craft communication roadmaps that empower your teams and clients to mine these powerful narratives that will immerse media in rich, human-driven storytelling experiences that will ultimately resonate deeply with travelers seeking authentic connections.

Key Takeaways:

- Master the art of "story mining" to uncover compelling community-level narratives that capture the essence of a destination.
- Develop strategies for creating human-focused press trips and media opportunities that go beyond surface-level attractions.
- Understand the power of micro-communities and how to position destinations as hubs for shared experiences, fostering deeper engagement.
- Discover how community-level storytelling turns residents into destination travel ambassadors.

*Presented Brianna Francis, PR Director, Madden Media*

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.      LUNCH presented by Connect BizBash and the TACVB Annual Business Meeting and Legislative Update

**1:30 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.      General Session**

### **If These Chairs Could Talk: Confessions, curveballs and career hacks from TACVB Past Chairs** *(panel discussion)*

Ever wonder what really happens behind the curtain in the world of destination leadership? Four fearless (and slightly battle-scarred) past chairs of TACVB are spilling the tea and maybe a little coffee, on the wild ride to the top. From “how did I end up here?” moments to “you can’t make

this @#\$% up” stories, they’ll share the wisdom, war stories, and weirdness that come with leading a DMO in Texas. Thinking about becoming a CEO someday? Come hear what they *wish* they’d known before saying yes. Equal parts funny and helpful, this session is your backstage pass to the real DMO world.

*Moderated by Amy Zientek, Director of Community Development and Market Intelligence, Visit Lubbock*

*Panelists: Larry Woods, Director, Visit Boerne, Marla Roe, Executive Director, Visit Frisco, Shannon Overby National Sales Director, Visit Fredericksburg*

2:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.            Break & Partner Hall

**2:45 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.            BREAK OUT SESSIONS**

**Visitors Centers: Fresh Perspectives and Proven Strategies for Every Destination** *(panel discussion)*

Whether you’re exploring creative ways to reach travelers, refreshing an established space, or planning your first visitors center, this session offers insights and inspiration from destinations of all sizes. Hear from our colleagues at Fort Worth, Denison, and McKinney as they share real-world experiences designing and operating visitor centers that serve their communities and showcase their brands.

Learn how to:

- Operate a mobile visitors center to engage travelers on the go
- Open a brand-new visitors center and build local support
- Create welcoming spaces that connect visitors to stakeholders and drive revenue for your organization

Bring your questions and leave with practical ideas to build or improve your own visitors center.

*Moderated by Lisa Dalton, Visitor & Cultural Services Manager, Grapevine CVB*

*Panelists: Alisha Holmberg, Assistant Director, Visit McKinney; Emily Agans, Director of Marketing, City of Denison; and Olivia Coleman, Visitor Experience Manager, Visit Fort Worth*

**Crisis Toolkit: Leveraging Your CRM & Website for Effective Response**

When a crisis hits, your ability to respond quickly and effectively is critical. This session will explore the best practices and strategies for using your CRM and destination website — including targeted website content — to manage crises in your destination. Learn how to streamline communication, keep stakeholders informed, and ensure your messaging is accurate and impactful.

*Presented by Michael Vizzoni, Director of Client Support, Tempest*

**FIFA World Cup 2026 – What to expect here in Texas**

The FIFA World Cup is one of the largest sporting events in the world! Next Summer, Texas will be in the spotlight as we host 13 matches in both Dallas and Houston. Hear from Monica Paul, Dallas Sports Commission, to learn how it is preparing to host this major month-long event, and how destinations around the state of Texas can help prepare for the influx of International visitors.

*Presented by Monica Paul, Director, Dallas Sports Commission, Dallas Sports Commission*

## **The Evolving Traveler: 2025 Insights from Expedia Group on Value Shifts and the Rise of Sports Tourism**

This session highlights two major travel trends: shifting traveler values from the 2025 Traveler Value Index and the rapid growth of sports tourism. Together, these insights reveal how travelers are prioritizing meaningful experiences, planning more trips, and increasingly influenced by social media and personalization—offering key opportunities for travel providers to engage and grow.

*Presented by Matthew Klug, Senior Manager, Media Solutions, Expedia Group*

3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.          Break & Partner Hall

### **3:45 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.          BREAK OUT SESSIONS**

#### **Impactful Strategies from Small DMOs** *(panel discussion)*

Small Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) juggle a multitude of roles. From managing operations and handling public relations to nurturing partner relationships, they serve as receptionists, salespeople, service experts, and event planners. These professionals also serve as contract negotiators, advocates, and community educators for funding initiatives. With just one or two people in the office, they take on marketing tasks like crafting compelling content, developing promotional materials, capturing photography, and enhancing their website's visibility. Discover how small-budget DMO experts thrive on limited resources through innovative thinking and strategic planning, successfully showcasing the unique stories of their communities.

*Facilitated by Denise Hudson-Brian, Tourism Director Visit Early - Panelists include Tanida Mullen, Killeen CVB, Blaire Friar, Seguin CVB, Amy Tidwell, Corsicana CVB*

#### **Striking the Balance: Managing Resident Needs Amid Visitor Influx**

Balancing the needs of residents with the influx of visitors during high-volume events can be a challenge. Join us for a panel discussion featuring our clients who will share their practical strategies and real-life examples on how they've successfully managed this delicate balance.

*Presented by Madison Graves, Sr. Customer Success Consultant, Simpleview*

#### **Placemaking & Destination Development: Scalable Strategies for Every DMO** *(panel discussion)*

No matter the size of your organization, placemaking and destination development are becoming essential tools for driving economic growth, enhancing visitor experiences, and elevating quality of life for locals. But how do you lead that charge?

In this powerful session, we'll explore why destination organizations are uniquely positioned to serve as the chief placemaking leaders in their cities, counties, and regions — and how to embrace that role with confidence.

You'll hear real-world insights from a panel of Texas DMOs who have launched or completed Placemaking Initiatives, Destination Development Plans, or Tourism Master Plans. They'll share:

- What sparked the need for their plan — and how they made the case
- Key findings, wins, and ongoing progress
- Creative ways they secured funding and managed the process
- How these efforts differ from traditional strategic planning
- Who they partnered with — from city managers to EDOs and chambers

Whether you're just getting started or ready to take the next step, this session will leave you inspired and equipped with practical ideas to tailor destination development to your community's unique needs.

*Moderated by Jay Burress, Executive Vice President, Hunden Partners*

*Panelists: Brook Kaufman, President & CEO, Visit Corpus Christi; Jeremiah Cook, Assistant Director, Tourism, Visit College Station; and Alyssa Abdulla, Director of Sales, Visit Sugar Land*

### **How to Get Noticed: Mastering the Art of Sales Outreach**

In today's crowded marketplace, getting attention isn't just a challenge—it's an art. Whether you're trying to break through inboxes, command attention in a meeting, or leave a lasting impression in 30 seconds or less, How to Get Noticed will equip you with the strategies to stand out and get results.

In this session you'll learn how to:

- Develop a killer elevator pitch that sparks interest and drives conversation
- Write cold emails that stand out—emails that get opened, read, and replied to.
- Use subject lines that cut through the noise and pique curiosity
- Optimize your follow-up game—without being annoying
- Leverage storytelling and personalization to connect more deeply with your audience

Whether you're reaching out to prospects, existing clients or partners, this session will help you stop getting overlooked—and start getting noticed.

*Presented by Heather Egan, Director of Leisure & International Sales, Grapevine CVB, and M.T. Hickman, MS, CMP, CED, Senior Professional Faculty & Hospitality Internship Coordinator, University of North Texas*

### **Professional, Personable, and a Little Bit Legendary: Inside Grapevine's Event Team**

What makes conference attendees feel truly welcomed—and keeps meeting planners coming back? In this session, discover the secret behind Grapevine, Texas's standout event experience: a dynamic duo of part-time hospitality pros known as the *Burgundy Brigade* and a passionate crew of community volunteers. Together, they form a hospitality dream team that brings warmth, professionalism, and unforgettable service to every event.

David Taylor, Director of Destination Experience for the Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau, takes you behind the scenes of this award-winning model. You'll learn how the city recruits, trains, and empowers its ambassadors and volunteers to create consistent, high-impact touchpoints—from registration desks to farewell waves.

Walk away with a practical blueprint to build or enhance your own event support team, plus tips on team culture, recognition, and how to make every guest interaction feel legendary.

*Presented by David Taylor, Director of Destination Services and Facility Experiences, Visit Grapevine*

5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

**Networking Happy Hour sponsored by Texas Monthly  
Thompson's Bookstore & Speakeasy – 900 Houston Street**

**EXPLORE FORT WORTH ON YOUR OWN – FREE NIGHT AND PARTNER DINNER**

**Friday, September 5<sup>th</sup> - Destination Spirit Day**

- 7:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Partner Hall
- 8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. Small DMO Breakfast *invite only*
- 8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:45 a.m. – 8:55 a.m. Morning Remarks, Wall of Wine Drawing & Introduction to Loud Tables.
- 9:00 a.m. – 9:40 a.m. Loud Tables - Round 1: *Learn from your peers!* These interactive roundtable discussions will be facilitated by table leaders on various topics. You'll choose one table per session. Full list of topics is below.
- 9:45 a.m. – 10:25 a.m. Loud Tables – Round 2: *Learn from your peers!* These interactive roundtable discussions will be facilitated by table leaders on various topics. You'll choose one table per session. Full list of topics is below.
- 10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. CLOSING KEYNOTE – Matt Clement, Madden Media**

**The Strategic DMO: A New Playbook for Advocacy and Influence**

In today's challenging and politically charged environment, it's not enough to be a great destination marketer; DMO leaders must also be competent strategists. This session explores effective advocacy strategies and tactics for your organization and the local tourism economy, drawing on the timeless, and sometimes controversial, principles of strategy and human nature from authors like Robert Greene. We will deconstruct these powerful concepts and translate them into a practical playbook for the modern DMO. You will learn to better navigate local politics, protect your funding, and build effective communication strategies by understanding the deeper currents of influence that shape every decision in your destination. This is not about theory; it's about providing a new arsenal of tools to win the battles that matter most. *Presented by Matt Clement, Managing Partner, Madden Media*

**Scavenger Hunt Winners Announced!**

**CONFERENCE ENDS**

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**LOUD TABLE TOPICS:**

**\*\*NEW** this year! Join us for Loud Tables, a fresh and interactive addition to this year's TACVB Annual Conference! Think of it as a "mini-shirtsleeve" session—facilitated, peer-led table discussions focused on the topics that matter most to you. These lively, small-group conversations are designed to spark idea sharing, real-world problem solving, and authentic connection with your industry peers. Bring your voice, your questions, and your curiosity—Loud Tables are where collaboration happens. *Attendees pick one table per session.*

- Travel Texas Co-Op
- Small DMO Teams
- FIFA
- Photography & Branding

Chat GPT & AI  
DMO Service Pros  
Festivals & Events  
HOT Funds  
Creative Site Tours  
Historic Preservation & Heritage Tourism  
DMS – Destination Management Specialist  
HR Talent Acquisition & Retention  
Event Incentive Guidelines  
Emerging Leaders  
Events Trust Fund  
Marketing Trends  
CEO Suite    *\*closed table, DMOs only*