



**March 18 & 19, 2025**  
**MassMutual Center, Springfield, MA**

**FINAL DRAFT Agenda**

**Tuesday, March 18**

**7:30 am – 9:15 am**

**Registration & Coffee**

**9:15 am – 10:00 am**

**Opening Plenary Session**

Welcome from Lt. Governor Driscoll  
Kate Fox, MOTT  
Mary Kay Wydra, Explore Western Mass  
Updates on MOTT Activities, MA 250 and More!

**10:00 am – 10:10 am**

**Networking Break**

Catch up with your peers and visit our exhibitors

**10:10 am – 10:55 am**

**Breakout Sessions**

- Beyond the Noise: Creating Content that Breaks Through
  - Moderator: Sandy Lish, The Castle Group
  - Kim Knox Beckius, Yankee Magazine
  - Ryan Hutton, DCR
  - Angela Prout, Shored Up Digital
  - David Zimmerman, Spirit Magazine

In a world where media channels are saturated with content, how can PR professionals ensure their messages not only rise above the noise but also connect with their audience? This session will explore how to craft PR content that stands out in a crowded media landscape, delivering impactful messages that resonate, build trust and drive action. From media pitches to social media campaigns, learn strategies for creating authentic, relevant and newsworthy content that captures attention. Learn how to use storytelling, timing and media relationships to your advantage, while navigating the ever evolving digital and traditional media environments.

- AI Tools to Explore for Tourism: Work Smarter, Not Harder
  - Tess Vismale, Dahlia + Agency

Ready for a tourism tech upgrade that won't break the bank? Join us for a fast-paced tour of practical AI tools that are transforming destinations. See how artificial intelligence is helping tourism businesses work smarter, not harder. Perfect for the tech-curious who want to stay ahead of the curve while keeping the human touch alive.

- Creating Memorable Moments: Redefining Marketing Through Experience
  - Moderator: Heather Munnell, VDA
  - Shana Bryant, Shana Bryant Consulting
  - Maddie Ogren, Access TCA
  - Rachel Strauss, CSI DMC

In today's fast-paced, content-saturated world, traditional marketing strategies no longer cut through the noise. To truly connect with audiences, brands must shift from telling stories to creating unforgettable experiences. This session will explore how experiential marketing can elevate your brand by immersing audiences in experiences that resonate on a deeper, emotional level. From pop-up events to interactive digital campaigns, discover how thinking outside the box can transform your marketing approach and build lasting relationships with your audience.

**10:55 am – 11:05 am**

**Networking Break**

Catch up with your peers and visit our exhibitors

**11:05 am – 11:50 pm**

**Breakout Sessions**

- Break Down Silos and Boost Results: Tapping the Power of Connection Between Social, Influencers and UGC
  - Laura Cyrille, DCI
  - Hanna Gbordzoe, DCI

Are your marketing and PR teams stuck in silos, leaving big opportunities untapped? This session with Development Counsellors International is your chance to change that. Discover the travel trends reshaping consumer decision-making and learn how to harness them through cutting-edge content creation and social media strategies. This isn't your typical 101-level session – it's a game-changer. By the end, you'll walk away with a practical, action-ready plan to take ideas off the "someday" list and into your refreshed communication strategy. We'll kick off by diving into today's most important travel trends, followed by a no-nonsense overview of the state of social media – think daily algorithm shifts, emerging platforms, and more. Then, we'll get to the core of it all: 5

Things Your Tourism Entity Should Do in 2025 to ensure your influencer marketing fully aligns with your brand's social strategy. Don't miss this opportunity to elevate your approach and stay ahead of the curve in 2025!

- **Unlocking Global Potential: Strategies for Capturing Your Share of the International Market**
  - Michele Cota, Discover New England
  - Amanda Davis, Brand USA
  - Alyssa Dion Rodning, Marriott Boston Back Bay Hotels

International tourism to Massachusetts is on the rise, offering incredible opportunities for businesses to attract travelers from around the world. However, targeting this segment requires a strategic approach that goes beyond traditional marketing. In this session, we'll focus on innovative strategies that you can use to thrive in the competitive global market. Learn how to adapt your offerings to different cultural preferences, effectively reach international travelers and position your business to succeed.

- **Host Region Spotlight - From Concept to Ceremony: How to Create an Outstanding Hospitality Awards Ceremony**
  - Mary Kay Wydra, Explore Western Mass
  - Michele Goldberg, Explore Western Mass

Want to build brand awareness in your community in a meaningful way? Hospitality awards offer a powerful way to connect your brand with the local community, elevate the tourism industry, and celebrate outstanding front-line hospitality professionals. In this seminar, **Explore Western Mass** will showcase the success of its **28-year-strong Howdy Awards for Hospitality Excellence** and provide a step-by-step blueprint to help you implement a similar program in your market. Learn how to recognize top hospitality talent, strengthen community engagement, and enhance your region's visitor experience.

**11:50 am – 1:00 pm**

**Lunch & Keynote Speaker**

Kate Fox, MOTT

John Doleva, President & CEO, Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame

*The Power of Sports in MA!*

*Presented by:* John David, President & CEO, Sports Events & Tourism Association

Discover the transformative impact of sports tourism and gain exclusive insights into the latest trends, all anchored by the

groundbreaking findings of the Sports Events & Tourism Association's State of the Industry Report, crafted in collaboration with Tourism Economics. Led by John David, President and CEO of the Sports ETA, this dynamic session will explore the unparalleled influence of sports tourism, exploring how it can serve as a catalyst for community development, economic impact, and enhanced civic pride.

**1:10 pm – 1:55 pm**

### **Breakout Sessions**

- **Film Tourism: Exploring the Impact of Screen Locations on Travel & Tourism**
  - Moderator: Meg Jarrett, Massachusetts Film Office
  - Erica Ashton, MVY Chamber of Commerce
  - Michael Dekoster, Gloucester's Maritime Museum
  - Taunya Wolfe-Finn, Woolf Tours

In this session, the Massachusetts Film Office will explore the dynamic relationship between film and television locations and the tourism they generate. We'll dive into how towns, cities and iconic sites featured on screen can transform into must-visit destinations, drawing travelers eager to experience the magic they've seen on screen. From the impact of iconic scenes to the role of local culture in shaping the visitor experience, you'll gain a deeper understanding of how to capitalize on the global popularity of film tourism.

- **AI Tools to Explore for Tourism: Work Smarter, Not Harder**
  - Tess Vismale, Dahlia + Agency

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- **The Road to 2026: Leveraging FIFA, MA250, Sail Boston & More**
  - Moderator: Undersecretary of Economic Strategies Sarah Stanton, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
  - Tricia Fenton, FIFA Boston 2026
  - Dusty Rhodes, Conventures
  - Sheila Green, MA250

As we approach 2026, Massachusetts is gearing up for an exciting lineup of major events that will put the state in the global spotlight. In this session, we'll explore how these landmark events offer tremendous opportunities for local businesses, tourism and

community engagement. Join us as we discuss strategies to harness the economic, cultural and tourism potential these events bring.

**1:55 pm – 2:05 pm**

**Networking Break**

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**2:05 pm – 2:50 pm**

**Breakout Sessions**

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- Museums 250: How to Engage
  - Moderator: Sheila Green, MA250
  - Alexis Goodin, Clark Art Museum
  - Lisa Krassner, Concord Museum
  - Ethan Lasser, John Moors Cabot Chair of the Art of the Americas

Museums across our state serve as custodians of our history, they are educators, sources of inspiration. Museums are an economic driver for visitors and tourists alike. Hear how three museums are engaging and embracing our history and inspiring the public with their art, objects and exhibits.

- Journey Without Limits: Accessible Travel Solutions
  - Moderator: Julie Arrison-Bishop, MOTT
  - Tom McCarthy, DCR
  - Jessica Doonan, Museum of Fine Arts

Join us for an inspiring and informative session on accessible travel. Learn ways to break down the barriers that often prevent people from experiencing the world. In this session we'll dive into practical solutions and innovative technologies designed to make travel more

inclusive for all. Learn ways that the travel industry is evolving to meet the diverse needs of travelers.

**3:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

**Day 1 Closing Plenary Session**

A Conversation with Governor Healey and author Elin Hilderbrand

MOTT Awards Presentation

**5:30 pm – 8:00 pm**

**Enjoy a networking reception at the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame**

**Wednesday, March 19**

**9:00 am – 10:15 am**

**Morning Plenary Session: All the Numbers**

In this research session, learn about trends in travel & tourism, what we're seeing in Massachusetts and how we're going to capitalize and grow our market share

- Mallory Smith, TripAdvisor
- Kate Fox, MOTT
- Matt Hatfield, Massport
- Mia Healy Waldron, Massport

**10:15 am – 10:30 am**

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**10:30 am – 11:15 am**

**Breakout Sessions**

- Multicultural Excellence in Massachusetts Travel & Tourism
  - Moderator: Carole Copeland Thomas
  - Dagney Ashley, City of Quincy
  - Janine Fondon, Writer & Producer
  - Glenn McGibbon, Meet Boston

Massachusetts' rich tapestry of cultures, history, and innovation offers an unparalleled platform for advancing multicultural excellence in travel and tourism. From the Freedom Trail in Boston to the annual Springfield Jazz & Roots Festival and the diverse culinary experiences of neighborhoods like Chinatown and Roxbury, the state thrives as a global destination where culture and community intersect. Our work with Meet Boston and other partners over the past two decades has highlighted the power of cultural inclusion to not only attract visitors but also create lasting connections between communities and the tourism industry. By embracing and celebrating the stories of Indigenous, immigrant, and historically underrepresented groups, Massachusetts continues to redefine what it means to be a world-class destination—one where every visitor feels seen, valued, and inspired.

- Culinary Corner – A conversation featuring non-conventional culinary experts that have a big impact on Massachusetts tourism
  - Moderator: Steve Clark, Massachusetts Restaurant Association
  - Ray Berry, White Lion Brewing Company
  - Casey Dowling, Aramark
  - Ken Toong, UMass Amherst

In this session, the Massachusetts Restaurant Association will moderate a discussion with non-traditional culinary experts from UMass Dining: #1 rated on campus dining by Princeton Review, 8 years running; Aramark Sports and Entertainment: feeding hundreds of thousands of sports and cultural fans each year; and White Lion Brewery, Springfield's first ever craft brewery.

- Harvesting Success: How Agriculture Drives Tourism
  - Moderator: Ashley Randle, MA Department of Agriculture
  - Erica Faughman Bosse, Gardner Farmers Market
  - Michael Nelson, Franklin County Fair
  - Anne-Alice Pietruska, Eastern States Exposition
  - Al Rose, Red Apple Farm

Agriculture isn't just about crops and livestock - it's a powerful engine driving tourism and economic growth. In this session, learn about how the agricultural sector is playing a key role in enhancing tourism experiences, from farm-to-table dining, to agri-tourism and local festivals.

**11:15 am**

**Conference Concludes**