



**RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Mission and Introduction</b>	<b>3 - 4</b>
<b>Situation Analysis</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SWOT Analysis</b>	<b>7- 12</b>
<b>Marketing &amp; Public Relations</b>	<b>13 - 18</b>
<b>Community Involvement</b>	<b>19</b>

## **MISSION**

*The mission of the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority and its management organizations is to stimulate Rhode Island's economy by attracting conventions, exhibitions, tradeshow, concerts, sporting events and live entertainment to its three venues. Our goal is to operate at the greatest public benefit at the least public cost.*

## INTRODUCTION

The plan that is described on the following pages begins with an analysis of the current environment in which the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority (RICCA) and its facilities: the Dunkin' Donuts Center (DDC), the Rhode Island Convention Center (RICC) and The Vets (Vets) takes into account our strengths and weaknesses, as well as the threats we face and the opportunities open to us. The plan also identifies our target audiences, communications objectives, and the overall strategy we will employ to achieve those objectives.

### **Major focus for the Marketing & Sales teams is creating and delivering:**

- Measurable economic impact
- Highest levels of customer satisfaction
- Professionally managed facilities
- Engaged community partners
- A variety of content for all ages and enjoyment
- A place where people want to hold their meeting or event

Our primary goal is to be more aggressive in our efforts to market the three venues and attract events with significant economic impact for the city and state. As part of our continuing co-marketing strategies, we plan to maximize the opportunities to market the DDC, the RICC, and the Vets as a full service entertainment and convention complex.

In addition, we plan to continue positive awareness of the complex and maximize the sale of event, meeting, and convention space. As a result, we will create maximum awareness of the complex with promoters, meeting planners and industry leaders, continue to educate potential users regarding access and on-site services, and enhance the patron experience at these venues. We will continue to leverage our media relationships to better promote our facilities through earned media and increased strategic advertising buys. Our Finance departments compile data for each individual event held which will enable us to identify trends in booked events and also let us know where we stand in terms of our fiscal goals

## SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Rhode Island Convention Center Authority (RICCA) and the Rhode Island Convention & Entertainment Complex continues to feel the impact of our region's economic challenges. The proximity of larger market facilities and casinos continue to impact our overall concert and entertainment business. Family shows consistently do well, but promoters are doing fewer shows and increasing ticket prices, with limited access to group sales.

Our hope is that the Providence College Men's Basketball continue to recruit some top athletes which will lead to the continued success of the team and increased ticket sales. The Providence Bruins consistently have been at the top of the AHL in attendance, and we anticipate that to continue. Their group sales team has a proven model, and we continue to engage them in ticket sales when possible at all of our venues.

Meetings, conventions and trade shows consistently perform very well in our market; however, the landscape and future of these businesses is slowly changing. In an effort to stay ahead of the curve, we are reviewing recent research and investigating new and improved ways we can accommodate the growing trends - such as increased attention given to strategic meeting design, increased reliance on technology during meetings, growing accountability of meeting organizers to ensure measurable return on investment and overall greater venue flexibility.

The Vets has experienced increased success with a broader range of shows utilizing the facility. From Disney Live to dance competitions, The Vets continues to find new and creative ways to attract business.

The Rhode Island Sports Commission continues to secure more high profile sporting events in our facilities in the coming years. In 2024 & 2025 we will host multiple NCAA Regional Tournaments in hockey, basketball & wrestling.

We continue to build our brand identity as the Rhode Island Convention & Entertainment Complex by integrating communications channels while also promoting outstanding services

as standalone facilities. This is what sets the Complex apart from other local and regional venues, and we continue to leverage this distinct difference.

## **CHALLENGES**

Each facility has its own unique challenges specific to its business, and the economic conditions, while improved, continue to impact each of our facilities in different ways.

- The lack of growth in business at both the DDC and RICC.
- Providence College Men's basketball aging fan base.
- Less spending on food & beverage during PC games.
- The proximity of large market facilities and casinos continue to impact all of our venues.
- An increase in total number of regional entertainment alternatives.

### **Challenges specific to the Dunkin' Donuts Center:**

- Proximity to a major top 10 DMA ranked market – Boston
- Proximity to two nationally recognized casinos with strong entertainment bookings
- Size of our venue limits our gross potential

### **Challenges specific to the Rhode Island Convention Center:**

- Lack of available space/dates during peak seasons and for short-term events
- Lack of ability to meet and feed larger groups due to limited meeting and ballroom space
- Fee for parking may be a deterrent to increased attendance

### **Challenges specific to The Vets:**

- Parking is difficult; free access to state lots can be too far and a busy weekend makes parking at the Providence Place Mall timely and confusing for some.
- Area signage alerting patrons to the building's location is lacking.
- Number of venues in Southern New England; competing theatres not only in Providence, but also Worcester, Boston, and surrounding areas.
- Proximity to Boston/Worcester, increased number of events can dilute market; artists may choose the larger metropolis over Providence.
- Calendar availability.
- Increase cost of production and advertising

## SWOT & Competitive Analysis by Market (RICC)

### PUBLIC SHOWS – SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100,000 sq. ft. Exhibit hall</li> <li>• Amenities on show floor (all utilities)</li> <li>• Ample parking that is safe, convenient, reasonably priced</li> <li>• Easy access to and from Route 95</li> <li>• Easy access by bus and train</li> <li>• Ease of move-in/move-out for exhibitors</li> <li>• User-friendly union labor rules</li> <li>• Experienced event management team</li> <li>• Dense local and regional population</li> <li>• West lobby space ideal for small traveling exhibits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of available space/dates for new events</li> <li>• Lack of space to expand repeat events into DDC</li> <li>• Downtown parking rates</li> <li>• Operations costs</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase pricing due to scarcity of space/date supply</li> <li>• RICC/DDC connectivity</li> <li>• Infrastructure (streets) improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of local &amp; state economy</li> <li>• Increased operations costs</li> <li>• Increased food &amp; beverage costs</li> </ul>

## CONVENTIONS & TRADE SHOWS – SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100,000 sq.ft. Exhibit hall</li> <li>• Amenities on show floor (all utilities)</li> <li>• Ample parking that is safe, convenient, reasonably priced</li> <li>• Easy access to and from Route 95</li> <li>• Easy walkable access by bus and train</li> <li>• Ease of move-in/move-out for exhibitors</li> <li>• Flexible, user-friendly union labor rules</li> <li>• Experienced event management team</li> <li>• Strong demographics – 10.5 million people live within 100-mile radius</li> <li>• Strong drive market</li> <li>• 1,800+ hotel rooms within walking distance</li> <li>• Connected Omni Providence Hotel</li> <li>• “Big fish in small pond” experience</li> <li>• Lower operational and rental rates than competing destinations</li> <li>• Excellent “back-of-house” customer service</li> <li>• Free basic Wi-Fi</li> <li>• High quality food &amp; beverage product and service</li> <li>• Experience in working with transitional groups (hotel to CC)</li> <li>• First-tier city amenities</li> <li>• TF Green Airport convenience</li> <li>• 8 colleges and universities in Providence/Warwick</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of available space/dates during peak seasons and for short-term events</li> <li>• Lack of DDC availability for joint events</li> <li>• Lack of ability to meet and feed larger groups due to limited meeting and ballroom space</li> <li>• Necessity for multiple hotel room blocks compared to competing cities</li> <li>• Direct air lift at TF Green Airport</li> <li>• Operations costs for marginal “hotel” events</li> <li>• Fee for parking</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination’s intimacy and personalized experience</li> <li>• VETS renovation for performing arts conventions</li> <li>• Runway expansion at TF Green Airport</li> <li>• Colleges &amp; Universities – ambassadors</li> <li>• Redevelopment of Fogarty Building and Providence Journal Building</li> <li>• RICC/DDC connectivity</li> <li>• Infrastructure (streets) improvements</li> <li>• Water Fire during summer, spring, fall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of local, state, regional economy</li> <li>• Increased operations costs</li> <li>• Increased food &amp; beverage costs</li> <li>• Competitive pricing offered at competing convention facilities</li> <li>• Competition from “big box” hotels</li> <li>• Competition from casinos</li> <li>• State of airline industry, reduction in service</li> <li>• Lack of new business/industry development in state &amp; region</li> </ul>



## MEETINGS – SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballrooms and meeting rooms on one level</li> <li>• Expansive pre-function space</li> <li>• Ample parking that is safe, convenient, reasonably priced</li> <li>• Easy access to and from Route 95</li> <li>• Flexible, user-friendly union labor rules</li> <li>• Unparalleled knowledge and experience in event planning and execution</li> <li>• Ballroom space ideal for large productions</li> <li>• Largest ballroom in RI</li> <li>• Central New England location</li> <li>• Connected Omni Providence Hotel</li> <li>• Free basic Wi-Fi</li> <li>• High quality food &amp; beverage product and service</li> <li>• Experience in working with transitional groups (hotel to CC)</li> <li>• Green Initiatives</li> <li>• First-tier city amenities</li> <li>• 8 colleges and universities in Providence/Warwick</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of available space/dates during peak seasons and for short-term events</li> <li>• Lack of ability to meet and feed larger groups due to limited meeting and ballroom space</li> <li>• For larger events, necessity for multiple hotel room blocks compared to competing cities</li> <li>• Inability to compete with “big box” hotels due to rental and operations rates</li> <li>• Direct air lift at TF Green Airport</li> <li>• Operations costs for marginal “hotel” events</li> <li>• Fee for parking</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination’s intimacy and personalized experience</li> <li>• New extended stay hotel being planned to replace Fogarty Building</li> <li>• Runway expansion at TF Green Airport</li> <li>• Colleges &amp; Universities</li> <li>• Infrastructure (streets) improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of local, state, regional economy</li> <li>• Increased food &amp; beverage costs</li> <li>• Hotels offering free rental</li> <li>• Competition from “big box” hotels</li> <li>• Competition from casinos</li> <li>• State of airline industry, reduction in service</li> <li>• Lack of new business/industry development in state &amp; region</li> </ul>

## BANQUETS / STAND-ALONE F&B EVENTS – SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exceptional high-end food and beverage product and service</li> <li>• Customization of menus</li> <li>• Ability to serve large numbers successfully</li> <li>• Expansive pre-function space for receptions</li> <li>• Beautiful Rotunda room for receptions or smaller banquets</li> <li>• Ample parking that is safe, convenient and reasonably priced</li> <li>• Central New England location</li> <li>• Largest ballroom in RI</li> <li>• Dense regional population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of available space/dates for short term bookings (within 12 months)</li> <li>• Fee for parking may be a deterrent to increase attendance</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination’s intimacy and personalized experience</li> <li>• Colleges &amp; Universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of local, state, regional economy</li> <li>• Increased food &amp; beverage costs</li> <li>• Lack of new business/industry development in state &amp; region</li> </ul>

## SWOT & Competitive Analysis (DDC)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong demographics – and family show history</li> <li>• 85,000+ college students within 25 miles of the venue</li> <li>• Excellent customer service</li> <li>• First-tier city amenities</li> <li>• Two very successful sports tenants</li> <li>• Ample parking that is safe, convenient, reasonably priced</li> <li>• Easy access to and from Route 95</li> <li>• Strong relationship with the PWCVB</li> <li>• Strong relationship with community leaders and public officials</li> <li>• Strong relationship with the RI Sports Commission</li> <li>• Experienced management team</li> <li>• Dense local and regional population</li> <li>• Reverse end stage configuration – adds 1,000+ seats to capacity</li> <li>• Exceptional media partners</li> <li>• Hispanic population is growing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of available space/dates during peak season</li> <li>• Lack of coordinated dates at the DDC &amp; RICC at the same time for joint events</li> <li>• Capacity too small for certain acts</li> <li>• Limited gross potentials and funds to compete for certain concerts</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats

## **SWOT & Competitive Analysis (VETS)**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State of the art building</li><li>• Multiple spaces</li><li>• Prominent mgmt/booking company</li><li>• Dedicated partners/residents</li><li>• Variety of programming</li><li>• Support of complex</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parking is difficult</li><li>• Area signage</li><li>• Still finding niche among established arts/culture venues</li></ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continued partnerships with large promoters</li><li>• Capacity reconfiguration</li><li>• Enhanced digital tracking capabilities</li><li>• Communicating with guests through new media and satisfaction surveys</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of venues in Southern New England</li><li>• Proximity to Boston/Worcester</li><li>• Calendar availability</li><li>• Increase cost of production and advertising</li></ul>

## MARKETING OBJECTIVES

Through the below objectives we look to increase the number of booked events, increase attendance, increase revenue generated year over year and improve our overall marketing image.

- Increase awareness for the Rhode Island Convention & Entertainment Complex through integrated advertising, marketing and public relations initiatives (*Pollstar, Facilities & Destination, Facilities Magazine, and Providence Business News*).
- Review current infrastructure/space and how it relates to trends in each area of business (meetings, conventions, trade shows, dance competitions etc.)
- Market the Complex as a unique facility that provides a flexible/robust product offering for conventions, meetings, trade shows, entertainment, arts & culture and sporting events to industry leaders, promoters, event planners, business leaders and convention planners.
- Continue to work with the Providence/Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau on creative marketing initiatives, PR opportunities, and collaborative media buys.
- Improve and utilize all communication channels with a focus on increased online exposure.
- Utilize the improvements to our websites, (mobile sites, video, social media etc.) to better engage our end users, provide a more robust experience for meeting planners, trade show organizers, concert and family show patrons.
- Work closely with PSE to make sure its sales staff has the necessary marketing information to promote and sell our events.
- Continue to work with Providence College to cross promote events and ensure an overall good experience for staff, players, coaches and basketball fans through garnering feedback on our performance.
- Marketing staff will increase efforts to cross sell facilities and discover new ways to better promote the Rhode Island Convention & Entertainment Complex and its individual facilities.

## **RICCA MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS OVERVIEW**

- Increase earned media for our venues
- Engage key audiences (customers, promoters, tenants and media) about our events, projects and milestones
- Continue to work with Providence/Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau to garner national media coverage for our events and venues
- Continue to leverage relationships with local and regional media organizations
- Maintain coordinated and consistent messages to the Authority and each individual venue
- Engage in marketing and public relations activities with individual clients/promoters/meeting planners at our venues in an effort to raise awareness of upcoming events

### **STRATEGY**

- Review and improve upon the first impressions of our patrons upon entering our facilities since customer service is the key to our success in this area
- Initiate an advertising campaign for our venues which will focus on the expertise of our staff and our overall ability to creatively accommodate and exceed expectations
- Redesign the necessary marketing collateral, which supports the ad campaign and includes online marketing initiatives and social media
- Work with both Providence College and the Providence Bruins to promote their events
- Focus on informing the public and media about events, conferences, concerts, performances, and sporting events that take place in our facilities
- Deploy press releases for local, regional, national media and the trades in an effort to inform the media and the general public about our venues and the economic impact these events bring to the state
- Grow our digital and social media platforms to increase awareness of events and the venues
- Maintain coordinated and consistent messages throughout the Authority, Complex and each individual facility

## **TARGET AUDIENCES**

- A. Local Media
- B. Regional Media
- C. Meeting planners
- D. Event planners
- E. Promoters
- F. Consumer/General public
- G. Stakeholders
  - 1. Board of Commissioners
  - 2. Providence Sports + Entertainment
  - 3. PWCVB and RI Sports Commission
  - 4. Tenants/PC and P-Bruins
  - 5. Governor
  - 6. Legislators / other elected officials
  - 7. Performing arts community
  - 8. Employees/Internal communications

### **Local and Regional Media**

Press releases developed and distributed to local and regional media when appropriate on topics such as concerts, trade shows, milestones, awards, and conventions.

### **Meeting and Event Planners and Promoters**

Communicate our successes to repeat meeting and event planners as well as promoters, in an effort to keep them up to date on what is happening at the venues and to remind them why they come to us. Send relevant press releases or articles to this audience to help build relationships and to create the perception that we know and understand their business needs.

### **Consumer/General Public**

The place to go for conferences, meetings, family events, concerts and sporting events; we continue to promote our venues as a resource for our community.

### **Stakeholders - Board of Commissioners, Tenants, Governor, Legislators, Employees, etc.**

Local legislators, state officers, and the RI Congressional Delegation are an important audience to keep engaged. They have the ability to affect our operations directly through legislation and indirectly by influencing public opinion. It is important to keep all stakeholders up to date on legislative activity involving the venues. Our employees, tenants and Board of Commissioners are our first point of contact with our customers so it's important to keep these groups up to date on events, issues, and news coverage.



## **TACTICS**

### **Grassroots**

- Identify incoming groups/shows/entertainment that might need assistance in their media and marketing efforts. Work with these groups to create a PR plan and outreach.
- Create and execute a survey for our tenants, suite holders, promoters and patrons at the DDC and The Vets, in an effort find out what we do well and what we can improve upon. (Autofeedback.com)
- Collaborate with the Complex marketing team to pool resources in an effort to cross sell/promote our events and services.
- Develop marketing collateral highlighting our facilities, which supports the ad campaign through online marketing initiatives, social media and digital media through the utilization of the DDC marquee and RICC, DDC and Vets websites & monitors.
- Design a new advertising campaign for the Complex and individual facilities. This new campaign will focus on the expertise of our staff and our overall ability to creatively accommodate and exceed expectations
- Send tenants, past and present clients and promoters positive stories, comments about our events and buildings in an effort to remind them why they work with us or why they should re-engage with us.
- Obtain client testimonials about their positive experiences with us
- Continue monthly marketing meetings with entire marketing team in an effort stay better informed, pool our resources, brainstorm ideas, evaluate best practices and to better promote our facilities and events.

### **Digital & Social Media**

- Continually stay current on website upgrades which include mobile sites, video capabilities, social media integration, web hosting capabilities, technical support, and enhanced navigation.
- Significantly increase our social media reach
- Increase our e-blast distribution
- Develop and execute digital alternatives for the Complex

## **Public Relations**

- Pitch local broadcast news teams on producing stories on our venues and the impact the events have on the local economy
- Manage messaging across all three venues and internal departments to ensure the delivery of well coordinated and consistent messages
- Maintain personal contact with state and local news, business, entertainment, and sports reporters to ensure repeated coverage of the Complex
- Send photographs and information to the State Department of Travel and Tourism for inclusion in state publications, including all PWCVB publications
- Send out releases to local newspapers and trades when a significant booking of the Complex is made or an industry record is achieved.
- Work with our tenants, promoters, event planners to assist in the development of marketing & public relations initiatives for their specific events.

# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A key initiative of the DDC & RICC Marketing Team is “enhancing the quality of life for the community that we serve.” On a continual basis, we accomplish this through working towards increased utilization of our facilities to maximize revenue for our State and in addition, we strive to support the local community.

## **Objectives & Strategies**

- Be a good corporate citizen within the business community
- Develop goodwill in the community
- Support community programs and non-profit organizations
- Provide a location and partnership with various events to promote food drives, blood drives, and other necessary collections to support the needs of the community
- Provide ticket donations throughout the season to various charitable organizations
- Secure character/performer visits to charitable organizations, youth organizations, schools, hospitals, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, and other community recreation centers

Below are some of the primary community outreach programs we have in place:

## **Support of Local Education**

- *Internships* - We provide internships to local universities, with the largest number hailing from Johnson & Wales University’s Sports, Events, and Entertainment Program. Interns have also come from Roger Williams University, Providence College, New England Tech, and RI College. Several students have gone on to full-time employment at our venues as a result of their internships.
- *Site Tours* –the venues routinely conducts site tours for classes from Johnson & Wales University and Community College of Rhode Island, as well as numerous community and government groups such as Junior Achievement and the US Department of Commerce.
- *Guest Lecturing* - Members of the Sales & Marketing Staff regularly speak to Johnson & Wales University classes on subjects such as convention sales and contract negotiations.