SPORTS ALABAMA

2026

# ANNUAL REPORT

## Where Champions Come to Play




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## *FROM THE PRESIDENT*

Sports is built into the DNA of Alabama and is the cornerstone of tourism across the state.

In 2025, Sports Alabama continued its growth trajectory - adding new members, engaging with more stakeholders, and building a platform that showcases all of the great things happening across the state.

As we unveil the annual report for 2025, we are proud to release our new brand - a bold new look as Sports Alabama enters a bold new era. Special thanks to our marketing committee for their hard work in developing this new look that embodies our mission.

Across Alabama, our members are continuing to raise the bar for their communities - taking advantage of the investment into facilities to provide economic impact, improve the quality of life, and tell their story thru events.



*Joel Lamp*

*President, Sports Alabama*

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# RAISING THE BAR

## More Destinations + More Facilities + More Events = Increased Impact

There is one constant in the tourism world - sporting events will drive people into your destination.

Whether it is a youth soccer tournament, an NCAA championship, an international championship, or a professional event, sports has the power to bring people together like nothing else in the world.

Across Alabama, sports has become a foundational element in their tourism plan. That's been reflected in the increased membership in Sports Alabama, but also in the investment made more destinations to take advantage of their community facilities to welcome people into their community for competition.

The 22 member destinations of Sports Alabama produced over 1,000 events and more than $650 million in economic impact in their communities. That impact goes beyond heads in beds – it fills restaurants, increases the local tax collections, and improves the quality of life for the citizens.

| Destination | Events | Impact | Room Nights |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alabama's Beaches | 167 | $ 77,300,000 | 116,881 |
| Auburn/Opelia | 83 | $ 36,923,325 | 23,778 |
| Birmingham | 158 | $ 263,961,276 | 253,465 |
| Decatur | 45 | $ 5,812,976 | 5,200 |
| Dothan | 60 | $ 19,900,000 | 66,742 |
| Foley | 85 | $ 44,500,000 | 32,206 |
| Huntsville | 70 | $ 62,279,009 | 77,603 |
| Jackson County | 65 | $ 20,300,000 | 45,296 |
| Lake Martin | 17 | $ 1,584,938 | 8,085 |
| Marshall Co. | 60 | $ 18,630,000 | N/A |
| Mobile | 82 | $ 59,355,352 | 56,433 |
| Montgomery | 81 | $ 52,874,285 | 48,026 |
| The Shoals | 25 | $ 5,900,000 | 9,750 |
| Tuscaloosa | 79 | $ 16,125,927 | 15,470 |
| | 1,077 | $ 685,447,088 | 758,935 |

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2025 was also a year of growth for Sports Alabama – adding two more destinations and bringing on affiliate members, which enables anyone in the sports realm throughout the state to get involved.

That growth will continue in 2026, thanks to the efforts of the Sports Alabama members, but challenges remain. Investment at the state level in the future to help incentivize events to choose Alabama will be a necessity to compete with the states that have made sports tourism a priority. With limited support at the state level, we've made tremendous strides – with dedicated support, the possibilities are limitless.

## SPORTS ALABAMA BY THE NUMBERS

**1077**
Events

**$685,447,088**
Economic Impact



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# NEW LOOK USHERS IN NEW ERA

Sports Alabama is entering a new era with a brand identity that celebrates the state's rich sports heritage while looking confidently toward its future.

More than a new name and logo, Sports Alabama represents a tribute to the legacy of competition that runs deep throughout the state. From Friday night lights and community ballfields to championship arenas and elite competition, Alabama has long been a place where athletes are developed, careers
are launched, and unforgettable sports moments are created. The new identity honors the athletes, teams, communities and events that have shaped Alabama's sports story—and those who continue to add to it.

Ultimately, Sports Alabama is about more than promoting events. It is about telling the story of a state where sports connect generations, strengthen communities and create lasting memories. The new brand honors where Alabama has been, celebrates where it is today, and sets the stage for what comes next.

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WHERE CHAMPIONS ARE MADE.

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"Alabama's sports landscape has evolved, and our brand needed to evolve with it. The new Sports Alabama identity reflects the growth, energy and opportunity happening across our state while staying rooted in the tradition that made Alabama a sports destination in the first place. It gives us a stronger, more unified way to tell our story, celebrate our communities and position Alabama for the next generation of sporting events and experiences."

*Shellie Kichler*
*Marketing Chair, Sports Alabama*






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# ALABAMA'S BEACHES

- Alabama's Beaches Sports & Events successfully executed the NCAA National Collegiate Beach Volleyball Championship in 100 days when the championship was moved from Huntington Beach, CA, due to West Coast wildfires. Along with host institution University of Alabama at Birmingham, AB Sports & Events secured an extended contract for the event from 2026-2031.
- The NAIA Men's Soccer National Championship came back to Alabama's Beaches in 2025, producing 1,816 total room nights in December with an economic impact of $1.2 million.
- AB Sports & Events' owned and operated Coastal Half Marathon, 5K & 1-Mile Fun Run had a record 789 runners in November, the largest participation in this event since it began in 2008.

## BY THE NUMBERS

167
Events

$77,300,000
Economic Impact

116,881
Hotel Room Nights



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# AUBURN/OPELIKA

- Live Events and Collegiate Championships - Savannah Bananas, Auburn University Athletics, and AO Tourism hosted a sold-out Banana Ball All-Stars exhibition at Plainsman Park. 66% of attendees traveled from outside Lee County, representing 30+ states, delivering entertainment and economic value. 5 NCAA Regional Championships, plus SEC Women's Tennis Championship were hosted in 2025.
- USA Diving Spring National Championships – The road to LA 28 for diving kicked off in Auburn, AL last May. For nine days, the nation's top divers descend upon the Plains, vying for national titles as well as roster spots on Team USA at the World Aquatics Championships.
- New or expanded facilities increase local opportunity and visitation. Several recreational facilities opened in 2025, enhancing quality of life for residents while also creating opportunities to host events that attract visitors and drive economic impact.

## BY THE NUMBERS

83
Events

$36,923,325
Economic Impact

23,778
Hotel Room Nights



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# BIRMINGHAM

- After multi-year preparation, Birmingham hosted the World Police and Fire Games in the summer of 2025. This sports competition brought 8,500+ first responders from 70 countries to compete in more than 65 sports. This event brought in $28.1 million in direct visitor spending.
- The National Senior Games return to Birmingham in 2029. This multi-sport championship for athletes ages 50-100+ was hosted in Birmingham in 2017, when the event welcomed more than 10,500 participants and generated $38.4 million in economic impact.
- The GBCVB, BJCC and City of Birmingham will welcome FISE and its 400+ athletes in August 2026. The FISE Action Sports Festival will be an action-packed weekend of elite competitions, fan experiences, and festival energy in City Walk.
- The Greater Birmingham Convention &Visitors Bureau elevated its global presence through a partnership with the Birmingham City Football Club. As the club's Official U.S. Tourism Partner, the GBCVB secured international exposure through in-stadium branding, logos on team apparel, onsite fan activations, and televised broadcasts.

## BY THE NUMBERS

158
Events

$263,961,276
Direct Visitor Spend

253,465
Hotel Room Nights



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# BLOUNT COUNTY

- The Blount County Multipurpose Agribusiness Center is the vision of our county commission, educators, local businesses and civic-minded individuals who saw a need for an advanced agricultural facility located at the heart of the county with a goal to provide hands on agricultural experience through classroom and experiential instruction, a location for impactful & relevant educational resources via Alabama Extension, as well as a modern community event space.
- At HomeTown Sports, our mission is to create an advanced and innovative athletics destination for travel sports organizations to thrive and excel in their athletic pursuits while maintaining that "hometown" feel.

## BY THE NUMBERS

In Process of Building Three New Sports Tourism Venues



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# CULLMAN

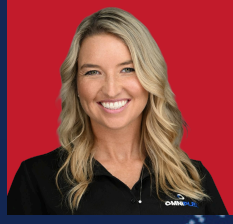
- Cullman County continued to elevate its presence as a premier sports destination in North Alabama. From hosting four major fishing tournaments on Smith Lake to welcoming elite basketball circuits including Adidas and Nike, our community proved it can compete on every level.
- Cullman reached a transformational milestone in 2025 with the opening of the OmniPlex Sports & Civic Center. OmniPlex immediately positioned Cullman as a premier indoor sports destination and earned a nomination for Best New Sports Venue by the SportsTravel Awards, gaining national industry recognition.
- The year included 17 baseball tournaments, two track meets including AHSAA and the Jesse Owens Classic, the ASA Archery Tournament, and regional Volleyball, Basketball, Cheer and Gymnastics competitions — bringing thousands of athletes, families, and fans to Cullman. These events generated significant hotel stays, restaurant traffic, and retail impact, strengthening our local economy and solidifying Cullman's reputation as a dynamic, multi-sport destination.

## BY THE NUMBERS

40+
Events



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# DECATUR/MORGAN CO.

- Decatur opened a new 12-court indoor pickleball complex, along with a 4-court indoor tennis building in 2025. Future expansions and openings in 2026 include a new 100,000 square foot recreation center with four courts, a 10-lane natatorium pool, walking track and meeting space. Additionally, a new sports turf complex with four softball fields and two multi-purpose fields will be completed by early 2027. Decatur has also renovated its ice complex and converted it into a multi-purpose event center.
- Decatur hosted several new events in 2025 including the 2025 UpDif Finals for UpDog Challenge that welcomed visitors from over 40 states and 5 Canadians provinces for a week-long competition. Major League Fishing's 2025 Abu Garcia College Fishing National Championship with 143 collegiate teams. The 2025 Southern States Athletic Conference (SSAC) Cheer Championships with nine teams competing for the conference crown. As well as annual events including the AHSAA State Cross Country Championships; Alabama Supper Cup; SeaArk Boats Owners Invitational Catfish Tournament; Alabama Soccer Association (ASA) May State Cup; and Bassmaster's High School Combine.
- Decatur was awarded the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Men's and Women's Lacrosse National Championships through 2028, which will bring the top 8 men's and women's teams to compete over a week-long championship.

## BY THE NUMBERS

45
Events

$5,812,976
Economic Impact

5,200
Hotel Room Nights



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# DOTHAN

- Hosting History-Making Championships: In 2025, Dothan proudly hosted the first ACCC Women's Flag Football Championship, marking a historic milestone for collegiate athletics and for the destination. Hosting this inaugural championship positioned Dothan as a forward-thinking sports city capable of supporting emerging and rapidly growing sports while delivering high-level event execution.
- Sustained National Tennis Excellence: Dothan has established itself as a trusted tennis destination through multi-year hosting of the Level 1 and Level 2 Boys' 14 National Tennis Championships, sanctioned by the United States Tennis Association. These national championships attract elite Boys' 14 athletes and families from across the country, generate multi-night hotel stays, and reflect long-term confidence from a national governing body.
- Dothan's sports and recreational facilities continue to support both resident quality of life and destination-level sports tourism. These assets enable scalable tournaments, repeat events, and sustained growth.

## BY THE NUMBERS

60+
Events

$19,900,000
Economic Impact

66,742
Hotel Room Nights



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# FOLEY

- In spring 2025, Foley hosted its first-ever Sun Belt Beach Volleyball Championship which helped to elevate Foley's national profile and reinforced the community's adaptability and commitment to investing in long-term strategic partnerships.
- Foley continues to expand its championship event portfolio, now having hosted four Sun Belt Conference championships — women's soccer, indoor volleyball, men's and women's cross country, and beach volleyball — welcoming more than 2,600 visiting athletes, coaches, and fans while further strengthening the destination's reputation for hosting premier collegiate events
- The Archery Shooters Association, in partnership with FST and Graham Creek Nature Preserve, successfully hosted another year of the Hoyt/Easton Pro/Am in Foley, continuing to build on the event's strong momentum and long-term success. Since its launch locally, the event's total economic contribution has grown by more than 55%, further strengthening the area's position as a leading destination for national archery competition.
- SDM recognized Foley as a 2025 Champions of Economic Impact in Sports Tourism for the ASA Hoyt/Easton Pro/Am 2025, hosted at Graham Creek Nature Preserve. This event estimated $1.7 million in total economic impact, producing 2,300+ hotel room nights, and drawing more than 6,000 archers and spectators.

## BY THE NUMBERS

85
Events

$44,500,000
Economic Impact

32,206
Hotel Room Nights



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# HUNTSVILLE

- Hosted five national championship events, highlighted by the USA Track & Field Masters Outdoor Nationals for the first time at Milton Frank Stadium.
- Welcomed the Conference USA Men's & Women's Basketball Championships for the second straight year – with four games televised nationally on CBS Sports Network.
- The NCAA Division I Cross Country South Regional for the third time – extending the streak to five straight years with a NCAA postseason cross country race. This was part of a 10-race schedule that continues position John Hunt Park as one of the premier venues in the sport.
- Brought college softball to Toyota Field for the first time with the Rocket City Softball Showcase, highlighted by four teams from the SEC competing against teams from across the country for a week.

## BY THE NUMBERS

70
Events

$62,279,009
Economic Impact

77,603
Hotel Room Nights



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# JACKSON COUNTY

- Hosted the 14th Annual Toyota Bonus Bucks Owners Tournament on Lake Guntersville in Scottsboro - The event drew anglers representing 37 states, brought new participants to the region and showcased the lake's world-class fishing waters and hospitality.
- Hosted the first large-scale kayak bass fishing tournament on Lake Guntersville in Stevenson - The Queen City Kayak Bass Fishing series brought competitive kayak anglers to the Tennessee River system highlighting the region's expanding appeal for non-motorized tournament fishing and drawing enthusiasts from across the country.
- The Big Bass Splash over 1,400 anglers, marking the largest participation ever for this event. With participants traveling from across the country and Canada, the tournament further strengthened the lake's reputation as a premier destination for competitive bass fishing.

## BY THE NUMBERS

65
Events

$20,300,000
Economic Impact

45,296
Hotel Room Nights



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Jackson County



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# LAKE MARTIN

- Continued Success - Explore Lake Martin has hosted many bass fishing tournaments on the waters of Lake Martin. In 2025, the lake continued to serve as a competitive destination for anglers at every level, welcoming events from organizations including the Alabama Bass Trail (ABT), Major League Fishing (MLF) Phoenix Bass Fishing League, Alabama Student Angler Bass Fishing Association (ASABFA), Alabama Bass Federation (ABF), B.A.S.S. Nation, and OGS Tournament Trail. OGS, A local fishing trail out of Dadeville, AL that brings multiple fishing tournaments to Lake Martin annually.
- Dixie Sailing Club - Explore Lake Martin has a unique mix of competitive events on Lake Martin, including the continued growth of sail boat racing. In 2025, Dixie Sailing Club hosted two Open Regattas that welcomed skippers from across the Southeast region. Building on that momentum, we have partnered with Dixie Sailing Club to host the Catalina 22 National Championship in May 2027 attracting sailors from across the country.
- New Facilities and Venues - Tallapoosa County recently introduced a new multi-use agricultural center in Jackson's Gap, Alabama. Designed to host competitive events such as the Lake Martin Rodeo and equestrian competitions. This facility expands the sports tourism footprint beyond traditional field-and-court games.

## BY THE NUMBERS

17
Events

$1,584,938
Economic Impact

8,085
Hotel Room Nights



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# MARSHALL COUNTY

- Hosted two preseason softball tournaments, welcoming both Division II and junior college teams to compete. In addition, hosted two ARPA events - the state softball championship and the state swim and dive championship, across three county facilities, drawing more than 22 teams for softball and over 1,000 swimmers.
- The Mountain Lakes Triathlon marked its 38th year with 413 participants representing 14 states. The event also earned recognition from Triathlete.com as one of the Top Sprint and Olympic Triathlons in the country, with only 14 races nationwide selected for the list.
- The Big Bass Tour returned for a four-day tournament that drew 838 anglers representing 27 states. More than 480 of those competitors traveled over 100 miles to fish Lake Guntersville.
- Guntersville Lake HydroFest generated more than $2.5 million in economic impact, featuring five boat classes competing throughout the weekend.

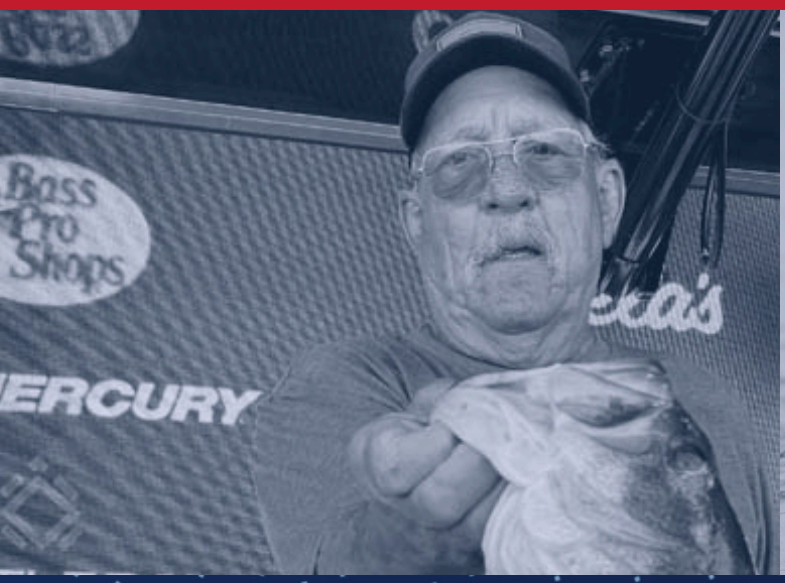
## BY THE NUMBERS

60+
Events

$18,630,000
Economic Impact



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# MOBILE

- One of the unique annual events is the World Championship Turkey-Calling Contest every June and the Dauphin Street Vault which we host every July.
- As for our largest annually held event, the Gulf Coast Challenge Powered by the Mobile Sports Authority, an HBCU football game we've hosted every fall since 2016 attracts about 15,000-20,000 attendees while generating an estimated economic impact of $6-8 million each game.

## BY THE NUMBERS

82
Events

$59,355,352
Economic Impact

56,433
Hotel Room Nights



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**Garrett Wagner**

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# MONTGOMERY

- The FCS Kickoff at Cramton Bowl kicked off the college football season in August with UC Davis vs. Mercer — a classic Division I FCS curtain raiser that always draws buzz and tailgates.
- 2025 ESPN Red Tails Classic — on August 31, Montgomery hosted an HBCU showdown featuring Tuskegee vs. Winston-Salem State at the historic Cramton Bowl to honor the Tuskegee Airmen legacy.
- Morehouse-Tuskegee Classic — October 4, 2025, saw this iconic HBCU matchup land in Montgomery for the first time, a huge cultural + athletic draw.
- 2025 Sun Belt Conference Baseball Tournament — Montgomery's Riverwalk Stadium hosted this key NCAA Division I baseball championship May 20–25, a multi-day event with top collegiate teams battling for postseason bids. Renewed this agreement through 2031
- 2025 IS4S Salute to Veterans Bowl — this major postseason NCAA bowl game was played December 16 at Cramton Bowl, featuring Troy vs. Jacksonville State, televised on ESPN.

## BY THE NUMBERS

81
Events

$52,874,285
Economic Impact

48,026
Hotel Room Nights



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# SHELBY COUNTY

- Triathlons Live here – With over 11,900 acres, Oak Mountain State Park is the perfect setting for triathlons of all kinds. The XTERRA North American Championship in May brings the world's top elite athletes, and attracts competitors from all across the United States. The Buster Britton Triathlon in August is the longest consecutive running triathlon in the United States.
- March against yourself – MammothMarch is not a competition, but rather a personal challenge to hike 20 miles across Oak Mountain State Park's beautiful, yet challenging, trails. In 2025, Oak Mountain hosted the first 2-day event for MammothMarch. Both days sold out and showed 2,000+ visitors the immense beauty of trails in Alabama.
- Vault to new heights – The Vulcan Vault debuted in Shelby County in 2025. Utilizing the Pelham Ice Arena space to create a unique 4-lane indoor pole-vaulting experience in July. From Olympians to youth vaulters, this event was hit and showcased how to partner and utilize facilities at different times of the year.
- New or expanded facilities increase local opportunity and visitation. Several recreational facilities opened in 2025, enhancing quality of life for residents while also creating opportunities to host events that attract visitors and drive economic impact.

## BY THE NUMBERS

First Year as Member Events

First Year as Member Economic Impact

First Year as Member Hotel Room Nights



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# THE SHOALS

- Visit the Shoals was honored to host several new organizations, headlined by the AJGA and Southern Pickleball. The AJGA at Turtle Point brought together young athletes from across the world for a week of competitive and high class play. The first pickleball tournament in the new Veteran's Park facility in partnership with Southern Pickleball.
- Continued Success: For years, Visit the Shoals has been hosting world-class fishing tournaments on Pickwick and Wilson Lakes. This year, we continued with collegiate, high school, and semi-pro bass fishing championships with organizations such as Boat US, ABT, ASABFA, and MLF. Just off the shores of the Tennessee River, the Shoals hosted the AHSAA Regional Softball Tournament, spending its sixth year here and the Cal Ripken and Babe Ruth Baseball/Softball Championships spending its third year.
- New Facilities and Venues The Shoals welcomed a brand new Pickleball and Tennis facility in the Fall of 2025. Sporting 12 hard tennis courts, 6 clay tennis courts, and 20 pickleball courts (14 Covered). The University of North Alabama will hold their first football game at the new 10,000+ capacity Bobby Wallace Field at Bank Independent Stadium on September 19, 2026.

## BY THE NUMBERS

25
Events

$5,900,000
Economic Impact

9,750
Hotel Room Nights



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# TUSCALOOSA

- Athletes Unlimited professional Softball league hosted several sell-out games at Rhoads Stadium while hosting their inaugural Championship Series. Over 60% of attendees traveled from outside Tuscaloosa County, representing over 15 different states and brought over $2 million in economic impact to Tuscaloosa.
- Visit Tuscaloosa secured several collegiate championships from 2025 through 2028, including the HBCUAC Baseball and Softball Championships, NJCAA DII Women's Golf National Championship, ITA Division II Singles and Doubles National Championships. Visit Tuscaloosa also hosted the USA Diving Regional Championships and the ARPA Boys Basketball State Championship.
- Several recreational facilities opened or received significant upgrades in 2025, enhancing everyday experiences for residents while also expanding the community's ability to host events that welcome visitors, fill hotels, and generate meaningful impact. The addition of River Run Park, two pickleball facilities, and major renovations at the Tuscaloosa Tennis Center further position Tuscaloosa as an attractive destination for event organizers.

## BY THE NUMBERS

79
Events

$16,125,927
Economic Impact

15,470
Hotel Room Nights



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# 2026 SPORTS ALABAMA GOALS

## 1 Increasing Profile

Telling the story of sports tourism across the state, increasing the profile includes organized marketing and creating unique opportunities to spread the word about Alabama.

## 2 Membership

Continuing to increase membership across the state with a goal of 30 members and partners by the end of 2026. This would represent a 110% increase in membership since 2024.

## 3 Engagement

Welcoming the TEAMS Conference to Birmingham and building a platform at the event that showcases all the members to maximize having the sports tourism industry in the state

## 2026 Officers



*Joel Lamp*
*President*



*Anthony Terling*
*Vice President*



*Don Dukemineer*
*Treasurer/Past President*



*Chloe Arnold*
*Secretary*