



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Abilene Convention
& Visitors Bureau





2019 RECAP

It's a great day in Abilene!

With 2019 at an end, we celebrate our successes and look forward to the future of tourism in Abilene!

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau's Annual Report highlights our efforts to market Abilene and provide assistance to visitors and groups to Abilene.

In this report, we focus on four types of marketing:

1. Earned - media, blogger and influencer relations
2. Owned - website, blog, and content generated in-house
3. Shared - social media, word of mouth and referrals
4. Paid - advertising

We also showcase new and continuing projects, grants, partnerships, visitation, and the economic impact of tourism in Abilene.

We look forward to continuing building upon this foundation and look forward to 2020.

#AbileneProud

Julie Roller Weeks

Julie Roller Weeks, director
Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau



PROMOTION

EARNED

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau continues to capitalize on earned media through coordinating with media outlets, responding to inquiries, and positioning itself on journalists' radar.

Stories are available on the AbileneKansas.org website's news section.



8 ABILENE Kansas

Abilene is the hometown of Dwight D. Eisenhower, a 5-Star General and 34th President of the United States, and that's just the start of this town's historical appeal. Besides the Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood home, visitors can ride the state's only operational steam locomotive, tour the Historic Seelye Mansion, take a spin on the oldest known Parker Carousel and step back into the Wild West in Old Abilene Town.

Photo courtesy of Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau

- Best Historic Small Town – *USA Today*
- The Most Beautiful Small Town in Every State – *House Beautiful*
- In the Kansas town that was home, the astonishing story of Eisenhower Lives On – *Los Angeles Times*
- 5 new options for groups visiting Kansas – *NTA Courier*
- The Grandest Historic Mansion in Each State – *24/7 Wall St*
- Top 1-70 Roadside Stops in Kansas – *Midwest Living*
- 19 Midwest destinations to travel with your family in 2019 – *Chicago Parent Magazine*





PROMOTION EARNED

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau works with travel writers, bloggers, and social media influencers to tell Abilene's story.

In 2019, the CVB hosted **seven** writers. The CVB provided lodging and meals, while the attractions provided complimentary admission.

Their stories can be found on our website: abilenekansas.org/news, as well as on the Visit Abilene, Kansas Facebook page.

2019 Hosted Writers:

Los Angeles Times – Catharine Hamm – May
Everyday Wanderer – June
Hobbies on a Budget – June
Wherever I May Roam – June
Travel with Sara – June
The Iowa Gallivant – July
Walk Across America – September

"Never underestimate the magnitude of history that many of America's small towns have. Pair that with incredible murals, public gardens, railroad tour, a one of a kind hall of fame, and Midwest kindness; and you get Abilene, Kansas."

- The Iowa Gallivant



PROMOTION

EARNED

Television

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau coordinated visits for KSN's *Good Day Kansas*'s Secret Spots segments, interviews with Fox 43, and photos for KSNT and other media outlets.

Radio

The Abilene CVB participates in KABI 1560's Inside Dickinson County interviews on Monday mornings to share weekly news and events in Abilene. We also invite event organizers to join us in sharing information about their events.

Newspaper

From press releases to feature stories, calendars or photos, the CVB happily partners with area newspapers to promote Abilene to their readership.





PROMOTION PAID

Recognizing its budget limitations and the rising cost of traditional advertising, the Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau strategically purchases ads.



2019 ad purchases included:

- Kansas Travel Guide (back cover) - 400,000 guides are distributed annually to people who request them, at rest stops, visitor centers, and events in and out of Kansas. Additionally, an online guide is available for download on TravelKS.com.
- Travel Kansas (Wichita Times publication back cover)
- KANSAS! Magazine
- TrueWest Magazine
- Kansas Territorial Magazine (Getaway Guide)
- Travel Midwest
- Midwest Living - Best of the Midwest
- Society of American Travel Writers directory
- Midwest Travel Blogger Conference sponsorship



PROMOTION

PAID



Billboards

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau maintains ten billboards along Kansas I-70, as well as one on Highway 15. In addition, our partnership with the Eisenhower Presidential Library *and* Museum, increases Abilene's presence by an additional ten boards.

According to 2019 data from the Kansas Department of Transportation, the daily traffic count for these locations range from 15,000 - 20,000 vehicles.

Visitors Guide / Rack Card

With many exciting new projects underway, the CVB chose to create a rack card highlighting area attractions until the new exhibits at the Eisenhower Presidential Library *and* Museum were complete and a plan for new lodging property was approved. This strategy helped juggle the expense of a new piece with the timing of new projects.





PROMOTION

PAID

Brochure Distribution

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau contracts with *Certified Folder* and *Central Brochure Distribution* to place the Abilene Visitors Guide in more than **250 distribution racks** in hotels, restaurants, and gas stations. The brochure is also available in Kansas' two welcome centers (Belle Plaine and Goodland), as well as other state-designated Travel Information Centers throughout Kansas.





PROMOTION

OWNED

Abilene Tourism Advocate E-Newsletter

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau creates an electronic newsletter celebrating Abilene. The newsletter is sent to anyone who requests information about Abilene. It is also shared on social media and in the blog on the AbileneKansas.org website.

2019 Abilene Tourism Advocate

- 2019 editions sent: 49
- Total unique opens: 54,314

Brochure Requests

The Abilene CVB mails information about Abilene, its attractions, and lodging establishments to anyone requesting information. In 2019, we sent more than **200 packets of information** to inquiries throughout the United States.

Visitor Bags

The Abilene CVB provides visitor bags for groups and events.

In 2019, the CVB fulfilled **19 requests** with a total of **1,837 bags**.





PROMOTION

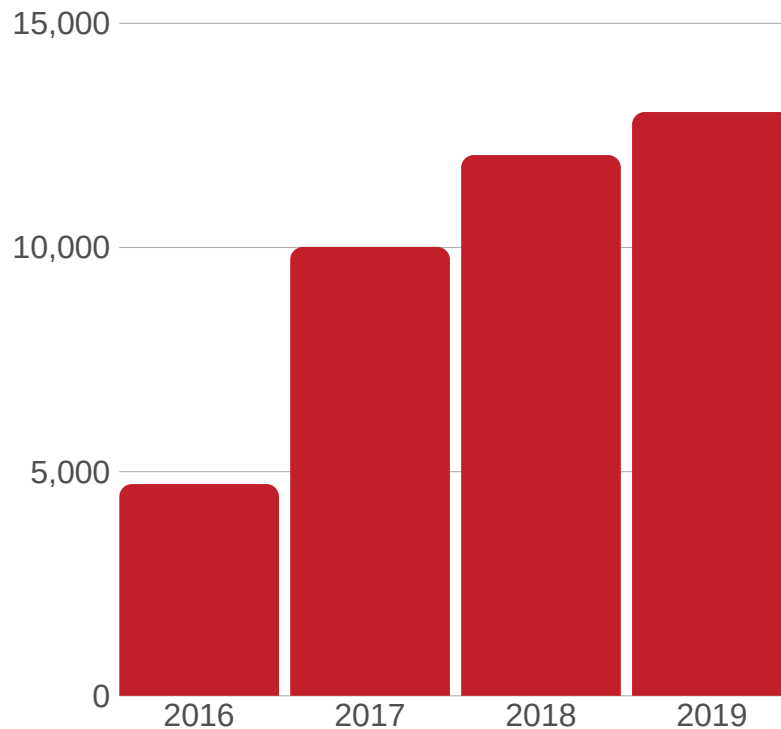
SHARED

Social Media

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau uses social media to reach new audiences, including the use of Facebook Live to film and share special events.

Comparatively, the Visit Abilene, Kansas Facebook page has significantly more page likes and engagement than other communities.

Facebook



Abilene is also on Instagram @AbileneKansas and Twitter @VisitAbilene. Videos are also shared on the Visit Abilene Kansas YouTube Channel.



PROMOTION

SHARED

Snapchat

In 2019, the Abilene CVB placed a series of Snapchat filters to promote Abilene and capture traffic at various locations.

LOCATION	SWIPES	USES	VIEWS	REACH
Harmon Mural	3956	342	8662	9846
Abilene Mural	4674	461	16928	15259
Central Kansas Free Fair	1629	567	34386	24632
Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum	2841	492	15164	14307
Holiday Inn Express	3861	645	23056	19351

Videos

In 2019, the Abilene CVB added short video production to its toolbox to reach new audiences on social media.

Videos included:

- Visit Abilene, Kansas Facebook cover video
- Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum
- OktoberFest
- Homes for the Holidays Tour
- Kris Kringle Market





PROMOTION

PARTNERSHIPS

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau is a member of organizations that help promote and advocate for tourism.

Memberships

- Travel Industry Association of Kansas (*Abilene CVB Director served as Treasurer of the Association in 2019*)
- Kansas I-70 Association (*Abilene CVB director served as Secretary of the Association in 2019*)
- Flint Hills Tourism Coalition
- North Central Kansas Tourism Coalition
- Tour Kansas

In 2019, the Kansas I-70 Association completed its room at the Goodland Travel Information Center. The room is dedicated to highlighting Kansas I-70 Association member communities.

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

The Abilene CVB maintains listings on TravelKS.com for Abilene attractions and businesses at no cost on the TravelKS.com website. In 2019, these listings received 5,651 views and 3,102 clicks.

The CVB also coordinates paid listings in the Kansas Travel Guide.



PROMOTION

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Jon Schallert Destination Marketing Workshop

Through a partnership with the Kansas Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Business Development Grant, the Abilene CVB hosted Jon Schallert, a business destination marketing expert, in Abilene for a two-day workshop.

Details:

- Workshop Cost: More than \$23,000, including more than \$6,500 spent locally for catering (all grant funded).
- Registration Fee: No cost to participants
- Registrants: 125





PROMOTION

SPECIAL PROJECTS



Abilene Likes Ike Campaign

With nearly 250 We Like Ike signs sold, Abilene showed veterans, visitors, and residents their patriotic support in the Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau's D-Day Commemoration contest.

Co-sponsored by Holm Automotive Center, businesses and residences were encouraged to purchase a We Like Ike sign to place in their yard or windows and decorate with a patriotic display.

Kansas Media Marketplace

The Abilene CVB participated in the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism's Kansas Media Marketplace to showcase Abilene to journalists.



PROMOTION

SPECIAL PROJECTS

American Flags

Each year the Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau coordinates a fundraising campaign to purchase 200 new American flags for Buckeye Avenue and 3rd Street.

NGA Spring Luncheon

Each year the CVB hosts a luncheon for National Greyhound Association board members.

National Travel & Tourism Week

The CVB celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week on Thursday, May 9 at an after-hours celebration at the Greyhound Hall of Fame museum.

2019 Awards

- Outstanding Tourism Supporter - June DeWeese
- Outstanding Events - National Greyhound Association Spring and Fall Meets
- Outstanding Attraction - Great Plains Theatre Celebrating 25 years
- Tourism Champion - Community Foundation of Dickinson County
- Social Media Fan Favorite - Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum

Freedoms Frontier National Heritage Area

In 2019, the Abilene CVB worked with Dickinson County to issue a resolution of support to join Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. Inclusion in FFNHA may open doors for additional funding for signage and promotion.





PROMOTION

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Branding

In addition to expanding its photo library with all-new photos, the Abilene CVB updated its look. With a new Visit Abilene, Kansas logo pairing its cowboy roots, Presidential ties and overall Americana feel, a new brand (inspired by a cattle brand) of Abilene was created.

The new logo and colors are incorporated into new marketing materials and used on social media. They are also used on the CVB's new website AbileneKansas.org, which launched at the end of the year. More information about the new website and analytics will be available in the 2020 Annual Report.



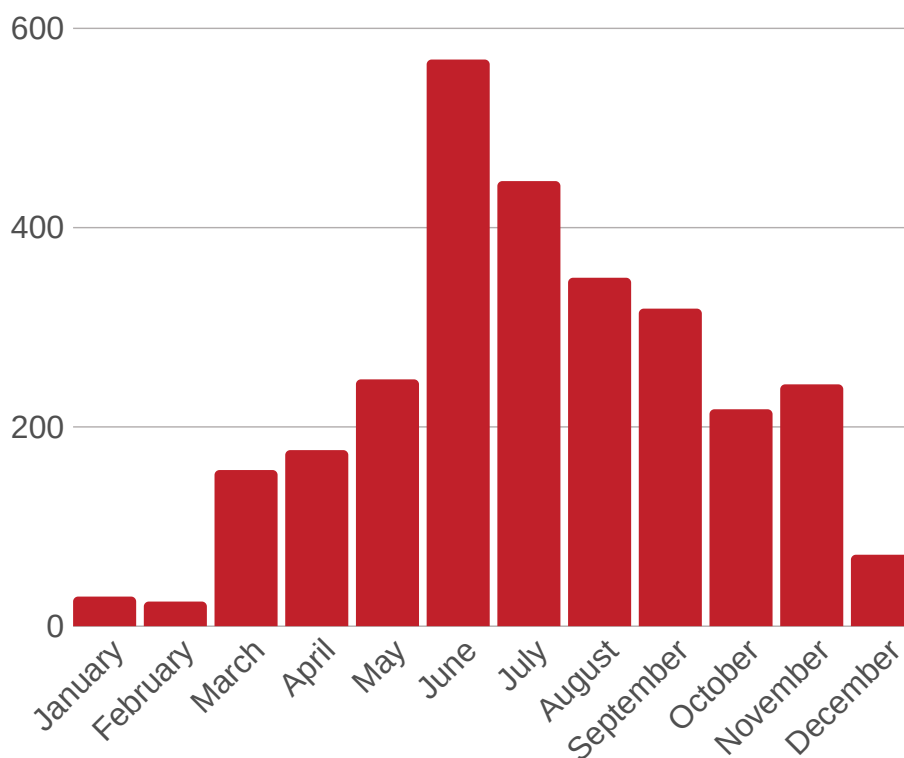


VISITATION

Travel Information Center

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau maintains a state-designated travel information center to serve visitors. The TIC was open seven days a week throughout the year.

2019 Travel Information Center Visitation



Abilene Civic Center

The Abilene CVB is also responsible for Civic Center rentals. In 2019, the Civic Center was rented for **44 different events** ranging from meetings to family reunions, weddings, and other special events.





VISITATION



In 2019, the Abilene CVB hosted new groups including Christian Motorcyclist Association, International All Round Weightlifting Association World Finals, Cushman Scooter Club of America, bank travel clubs, and other group tours. The CVB assists with itineraries, reservations, welcome bags, and other requests.

Attraction Visitation:

- Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad: 7,698
- Dickinson County Heritage Center: 7,898
- Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum: 147,256
- Great Plains Theatre: 10,200
- Greyhound Hall of Fame: 7,287
- Old Abilene Town: 3,000
- Seelye Mansion: 8,368



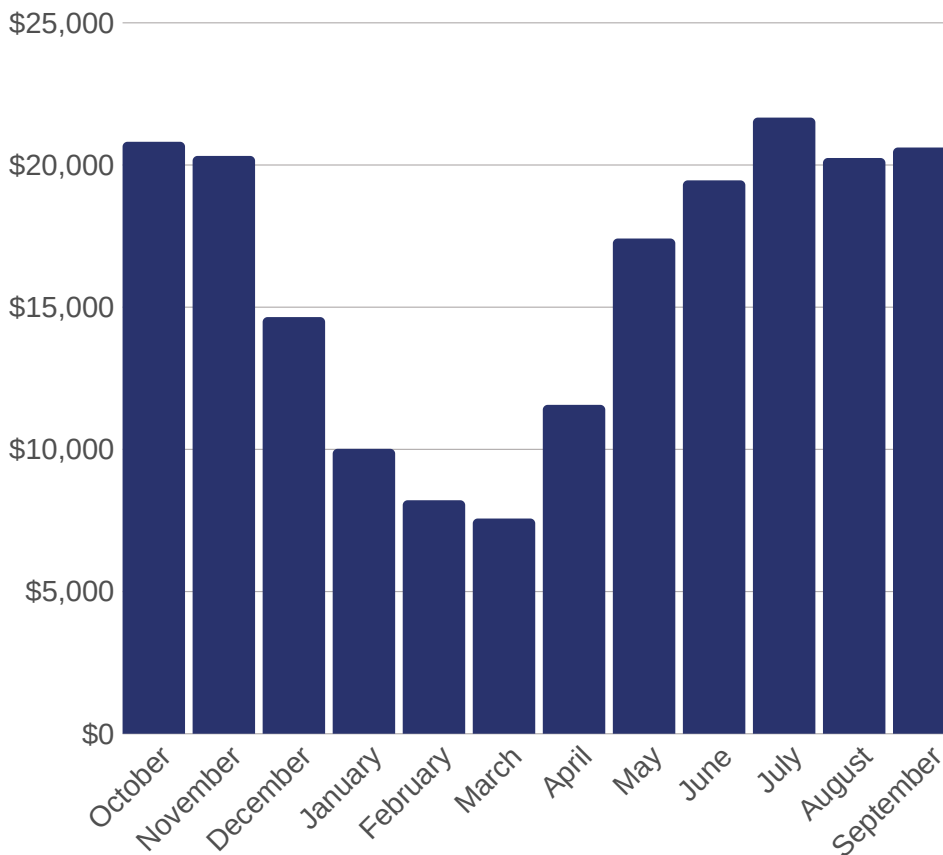
ECONOMIC IMPACT

Transient Guest Tax

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau is predominately funded through Transient Guest Tax, a tax paid by travelers when staying in one of Abilene's hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts or Airbnbs.

Collections totaled \$192,311.84 with \$2,403,898.00 in sales in 2019. In addition, the City of Abilene received \$18,029.24 in Sales Tax collections from these rooms.

2019 Transient Guest Tax Collections



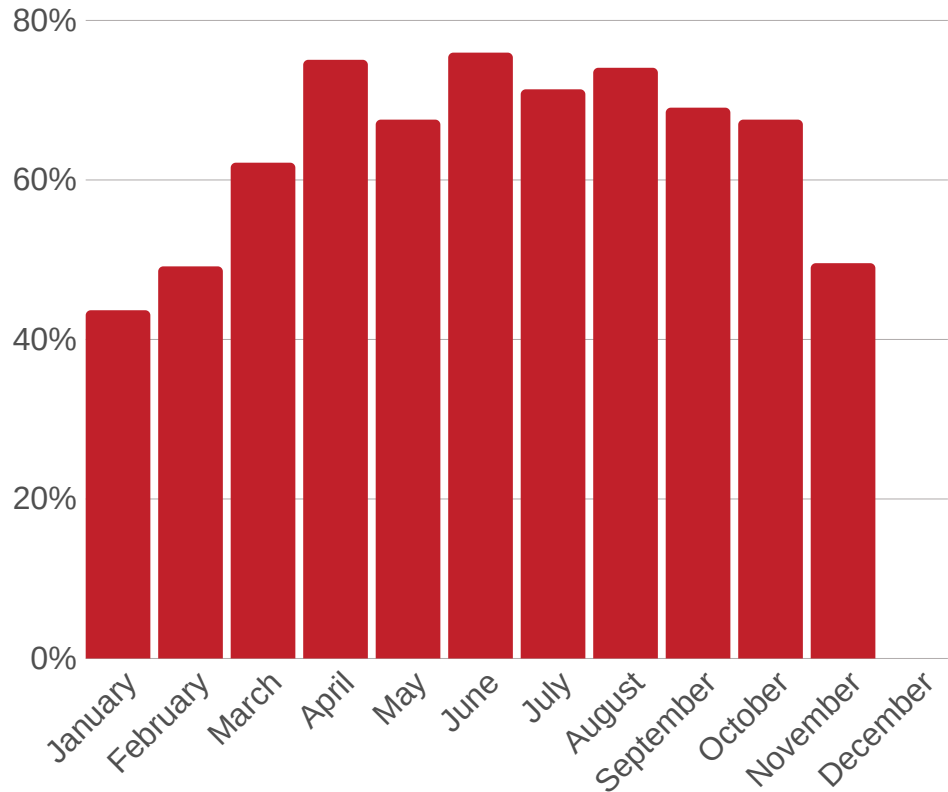


ECONOMIC IMPACT

Occupancy

Each month, the Abilene CVB receives an occupancy report from STR, Inc. This data is aggregated from the following properties: Courtyard (Junction City), Holiday Inn Express & Suites (Salina), Holiday Inn (Salina), Holiday Inn Express (Abilene) and Super 8 (Abilene).

2019 Occupancy

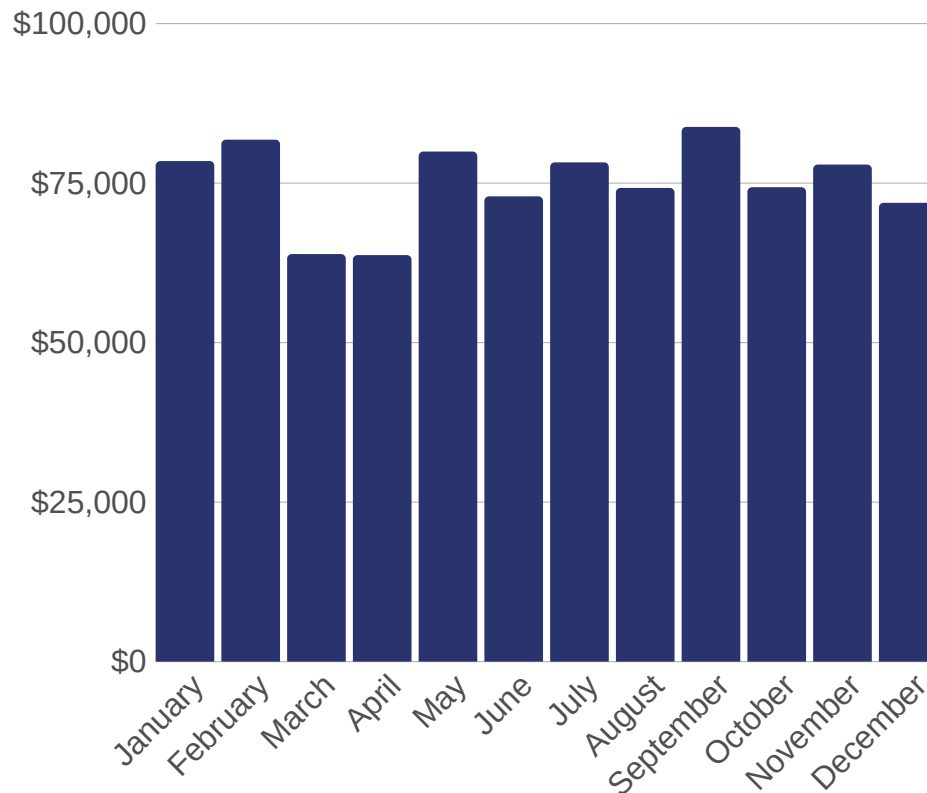




ECONOMIC IMPACT

Sales Tax

The City of Abilene sales tax is .75%. According to the Kansas Department of Revenue, 2019 sales tax receipts totaled more than \$900,000 from \$10,924,903.73 in sales at Abilene businesses.





BUDGET

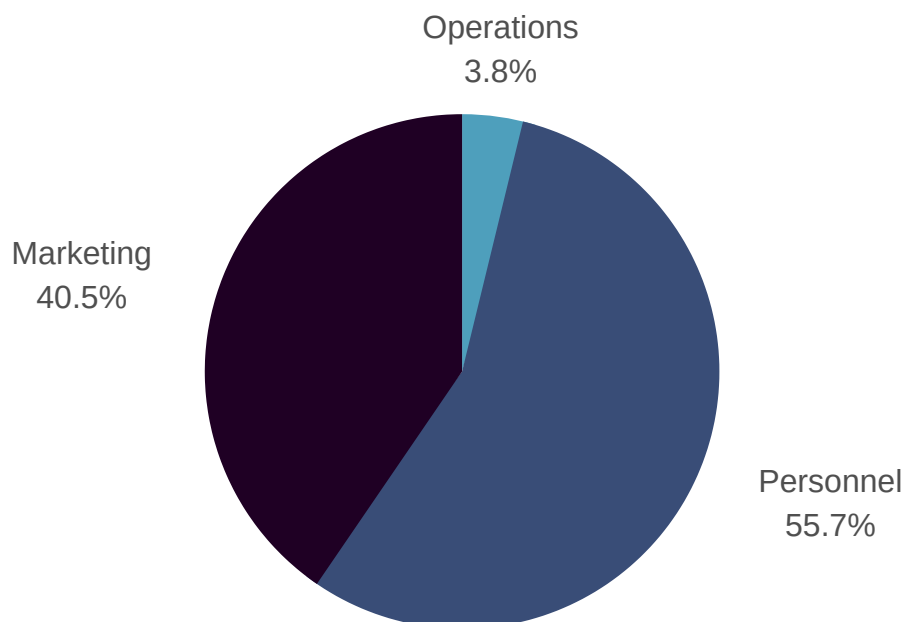
The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau is predominately funded through Transient Guest Tax, a tax paid by travelers when staying in one of Abilene's hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts or Airbnbs. Additional revenue is generated from Civic Center rentals, gift shop sales, reimbursed advertising costs, and other initiatives.

2019

- Cash Forward - \$50,000.00
- Revenue - \$241,186.23
- Expenses - \$249,398.29
- End of Year Balance - \$41,787.94

2019 Tourism Budget - Expenses

Note: Staff time spent creating marketing pieces in-house is listed as personnel.



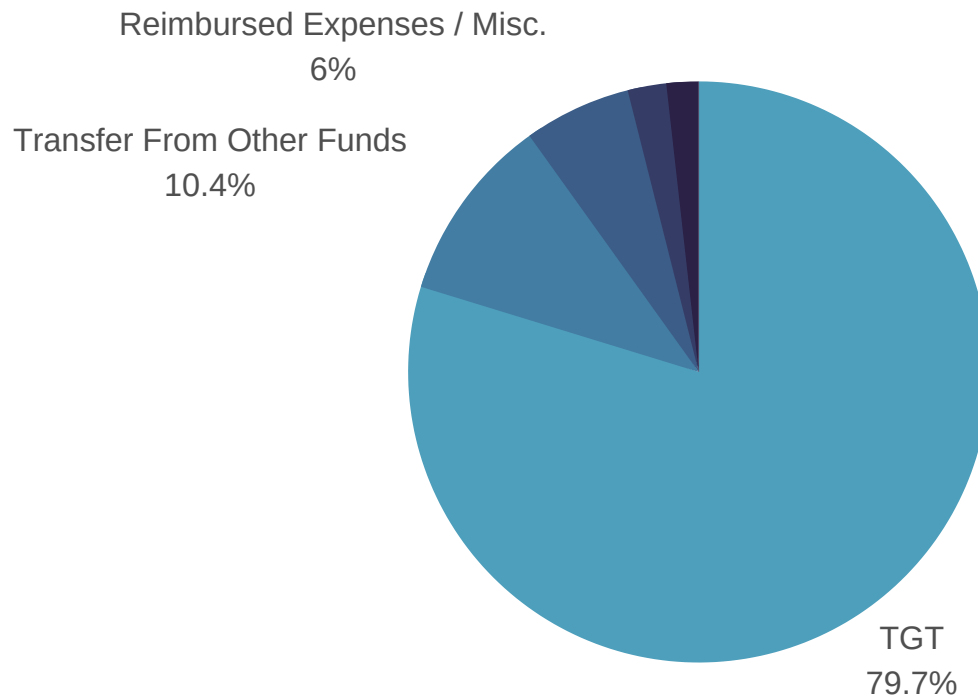


BUDGET

2019 Tourism Budget - Revenue

Note: Sale of merchandise, reimbursed expenses, Civic Center rentals, and other miscellaneous income equals less than 10% of revenue.

The CVB started 2019 with \$50,000 in cash carryover, which is not reflected in the chart below.





ABOUT US

Abilene CVB Staff

- Julie Roller Weeks, *director*
- Courtney Flora, *tourism assistant*
- Becky Kelley, *travel information center ambassador*
- Julie Patton, *travel information center ambassador*
- Edna Swanson, *travel information center ambassador*

Abilene CVB Advisory Board

- Allison Blake, *Abilene Area Chamber of Commerce*
- Mukul Ghosh Hajra, *Holiday Inn Express*
- Samantha Kenner, *Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum*
- Mary Jane Oard, *Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad*
- Kimmy Phillips, *Last Chance Graphics*
- Deb Sanders, *National Old West Trails Foundation*
- Elizabeth Weese, *Community Foundation of Dickinson County*



"The proudest thing I can claim is that I am from Abilene."

Dwight D. Eisenhower
June 22, 1945

**ABILENE CONVENTION &
VISITORS BUREAU**

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