

VISIT GAINESVILLE ALACHUA COUNTY

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL REPORT – MARCH 2025



RECENT UPDATES

Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives (DDD)

Features Alachua County Restaurateur

The first episode of DDD featuring an Alachua County restaurant will air on Friday, March 14, 2025, at 9 p.m. EST on Food Network. The episode, titled "African, Sicilian & Sausage," showcases Fehrenbacher's Meats & Eats at 4th Avenue Food Park. This national spotlight highlights Alachua County's diverse culinary scene. We will be amplifying the episode through Visit Gainesville, Alachua County's digital channels and encouraging local engagement.

Workforce Initiative Pilot Program: Certified Guest Service Professional (CGSP) Certification

Visit Gainesville, Alachua County launched a pilot program offering free Certified Guest Service Professional (CGSP) certifications to Alachua County's hospitality and tourism workforce through the American Hotel and Lodging Education Institute (AHLEI).

The program is open to the first 150 participants, with 50 currently enrolled.

GROUP SALES – MARCH 2025

Through local community efforts and targeted sales missions at industry association events, such as FL Society of Association Executives (FSAE) and Meeting Professionals International (MPI), Visit Gainesville, Alachua County promotes the county as a preferred conference destination. The visitors bureau offers professional services including assistance with RFP sourcing, itinerary planning, financial incentives via the Meeting Advantage program and more to support the success of events in Alachua County.

RECENT / UPCOMING SALES MISSIONS & TRADESHOWS

Visit Florida's Huddle and Encounter, Ocala, FL – February 3–5, 2025

The team met one-on-one with 65 meeting planners, tour operators, and travel writers, fostering connections and showcasing the benefits of hosting events in Alachua County. GNV Regional Airport joined VCB staff in highlighting the ease and convenience of flying in and out of Gainesville. Visit Gainesville, Alachua County continued its successful sponsorship of the Coffee Bar station, a well-received engagement opportunity that encouraged conversations with attendees. This year's presence was further elevated with highly visible, on-brand displays and an updated group sales brochure, providing fresh resources for planners.

Destinations of Florida, DMO Hosted Meeting Planner Reception, Tallahassee, FL – February 25, 2025

Along with 10+ other DMOs, Visit Gainesville, Alachua County is co-hosting a reception for meeting planners and decision-makers in the Tallahassee area to collectively promote the benefits of incorporating local DMOs into conference planning throughout Florida. The evening will feature messaging points from each DMO representative, highlighting their destination's offerings and networking with invited planners. This event provides an opportunity for our team to showcase Alachua County's meeting capabilities, planner services, and event spaces.

TRAVEL WRITERS

Itinerary Development for Visit Florida Vetted Travel Writer

On assignment for the Winnipeg Free Press

April 26 – 28, 2025

Unique Visitors per Month: 395,000

The VCB is assisting in developing an itinerary for a freelance writer on assignment with Canadian based *Winnipeg Free Press*. The 1,000-word roundup piece on Florida destinations will include Alachua County's culinary scene, history, and health and wellness experiences.

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UPCOMING

National Travel and Tourism Week 2025
May 5–11, 2025

Visit Gainesville, Alachua County will celebrate by hosting the 3rd Annual Spirit of Hospitality Awards, recognizing outstanding hospitality professionals. Staff will deliver awards in person and visit all lodging properties to thank frontline workers for their contributions.

Alachua County Agritourism Conference
Summer 2025, Date TBD

Visit Gainesville, Alachua County will host the Alachua County Agritourism Conference, bringing together agritourism operators and those interested in developing agritourism ventures. The workshop will cover industry best practices through expert speaker sessions, interactive discussions, and networking opportunities.

Topics to include:

- Agriculture and Agritourism Trends
- Legal Considerations & Tax Benefits
- Permitting & Fire Safety
- Funding and Support Opportunities

Photo: Bailey M. and Jessica H. with meeting planner at Visit Florida's Encounter 2025

GROUP SALES – MARCH 2025

RECENTLY SOURCED RFP

Chiefs for Change 2025 Annual Meeting
October or November 2025
450+ total room nights
Sourced at Visit Florida's Encounter 2025

Judicial Assistants Association of Florida 2028 & 2029 Annual Meeting
September 2028 and 2029
450+ total room nights
Sourced at Visit Florida's Encounter 2025

Florida Association of City Clerks, 2027 Fall Academy
October 23 – 29, 2027
650 total room nights
Sourced at Visit Florida's Encounter 2025

Florida Association City Clerks, 2027 Conference & Academy
June of July 2027
650+ total room nights
Sourced at Visit Florida's Encounter 2025



The Meeting Advantage Program has 6 new applications, with a requested funding amount of \$15,900. Combined these events are projected to generate approximately \$135,076 in lodging revenue and bring an estimated direct spending economic impact of \$305,629 to Alachua County with an induced total economic impact of \$473,128.

NEW APPLICATION REQUEST: \$15,900.00

Estimated Lodging Revenue: **\$135,076.00**

Estimated Direct Sales Economic Impact: **\$305,629.00**

Estimated Total Economic Impact: **\$473,128.00**

FY2025 Meeting Advantage Program Budget Allocation \$200,000

Fiscal YTD Awards **\$105,700.00**

Fiscal YTD TOTAL REIMBURSED GRANT AMOUNT: **\$10,700.60**

HOPE Animal Assisted Crisis Response, Southeast Regional Annual Workshop

Verified Request Amount: \$1,125.00

April 10 – 13, 2025

Conference Location: Santa Fe College Institute of Public Safety

Lodging Location: Best Western Gateway Grand

75 room nights

UF/IFAS Conference on Applied Statistics in Agriculture and Natural Resources

Verified Request Amount: \$2,175.00

May 11 – 16, 2025

Lodging & Conference Location: Hotel Indigo at Celebration Pointe

145 room nights

American Shoulder & Elbow Surgeons Foundation, Central Florida Shoulder & Elbow Week 2025

Verified Request Amount: \$900.00

May 16 – 17, 2025

Lodging Location: Hyatt Place Downtown Gainesville

Conference Location: Champions Club at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium

60 room nights

Florida Association of Genetic Counselors, 2025 Annual Education Conference

Verified Request Amount: \$900.00

May 29 – 30, 2025

Lodging & Conference Location: Hilton University of Florida Conference Center

60 room nights

UF/Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Summer Short Course 2025

Verified Request Amount: \$900.00

June 1 – 3, 2025

Conference Location: Gainesville Garden Club and UF Straughn Center

Lodging Location: Drury Inn and Suites

60 room nights

UF/PURC World Bank International Training on Utility Regulations & Policy

Verified Request Amount: \$9,900.00

June 9 – 18, 2025

Lodging & Conference Location: Hilton University of Florida Conference Center

660 room nights