

North American Edition

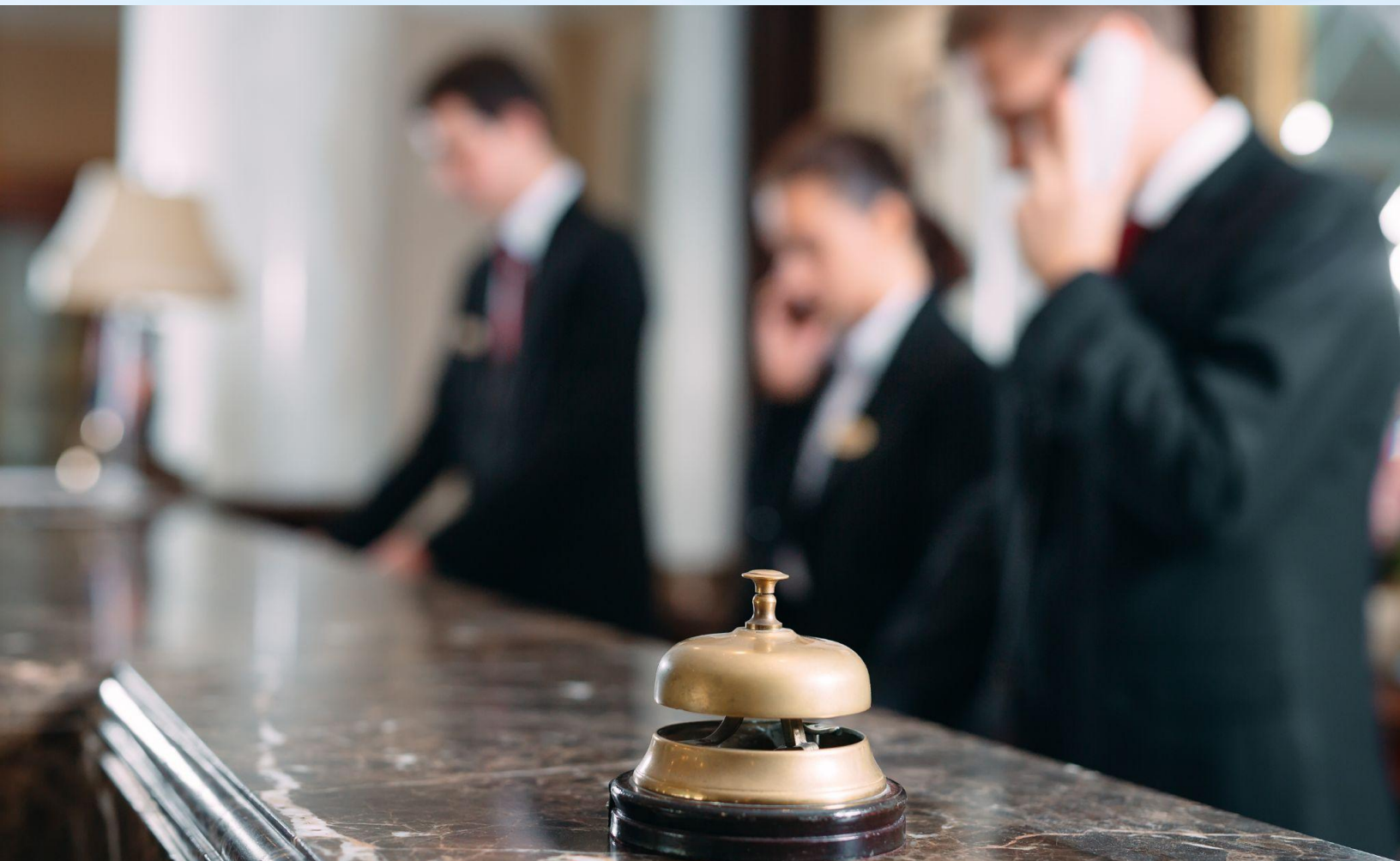
TIME FOR

DEMOCRACY

**Featured
Research:**

**Identifying a Community Capital Investment
Portfolio to Sustain a Tourism Workforce**

From: Knollenberg, Brune, Harrison, & Savage



OVERVIEW

In the ongoing recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry has come to recognize the value of investing in workforce members. Without a robust workforce, tourism businesses and the destinations they support are vulnerable to systemic shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises. Challenges with attracting and retaining workforce members increase when destinations are remote, have limited housing stock, and a high cost of living.

Ocracoke, North Carolina is an island destination that faces these challenges – it is a one-hour ferry ride away from its nearest port and its economy is almost entirely dependent on tourism. The entire island is home to only 797 residents (40% of which are native Spanish speakers) but generated \$53 million in visitor spending in 2021. Business owners, residents, and local leaders have invested in multiple strategies to sustain a tourism workforce on the island. These strategies have helped to sustain a tourism workforce that is comprised of long-time residents, new arrivals (including immigrants from Mexico and Honduras), and seasonal workers.

INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO FOR SUSTAINING A TOURISM WORKFORCE

In a 2018 study, researchers used focus groups and interviews to determine the investment strategies that supported the tourism workforce in Ocracoke. These conversations engaged thirty-seven (37) stakeholders (employers, employees, elected officials, etc.) who revealed the importance of the following four (4) resources and associated strategies that your destination could invest in to support the tourism workforce:

| Social | Cultural | Human | Natural |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish mechanisms to support community members in times of need.• Encourage practices to support tourism employee quality of life (e.g., equitable pricing) among local businesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize residents (including tourism employees) for their community contributions.• Celebrate community connectivity and culture. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote opportunities for career advancement with tourism employees and their employers.• Prioritize quality public education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leverage natural features to centralize development so tourism employees are not isolated from the community.• Protect natural resources for the benefits of residents and visitors. |

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