



DELAWARE
ARTS
ALLIANCE

Cultural Tourism Messaging Playbook

Image © Mack Made | Cityfest, Inc. Wilmington

About This Playbook

The CREATE Plan, Delaware's first comprehensive study of the creative economy, identified developing a statewide cultural brand as a priority recommendation. When most people hear the word "brand," they immediately look for a logo or a catchy tagline. But before we can design a mark or write a slogan, there has to be a shared foundation: a clear, strategic story that defines who we are, what we offer, and how we talk about our arts and culture sector.

That strategy is exactly what this playbook establishes. The core message and messaging pillars provide Delaware's cultural tourism partners with a shared language to build from right now. This framework is designed to be specific enough to be immediately useful, yet flexible enough to work across every county and platform. It gives us a unified voice to strengthen our individual marketing today, while creating the strategic baseline needed for any future statewide cultural branding initiatives.

How to Use This Playbook

This playbook is a shared resource for anyone working on cultural tourism marketing and communications at the state or county level including tourism offices, CVBs, and economic development partners.

If you are already telling a Delaware arts and culture story, this document is designed to amplify that work. Our creative footprint is larger and richer than most visitors realize, but because we have lacked a shared through-line, our collective impact has often been smaller than the sum of its parts. This playbook gives our individual efforts a common language to help tell the same story about the Delaware arts and culture brand.

You don't have to use this word-for-word or abandon what is already working for your specific audience. The goal is that Delaware's arts and culture story—told by any of us, in any channel—builds a statewide identity that is original and unmistakably Delaware.

What's In Here

- The core message and how it connects to four supporting pillars
- Ready-to-use copy that can be used in social media, web, email, or print pieces
- A shared content library of photos and videos from Delaware arts organizations, ready to download and use
- Media pitch guidance for framing the Delaware arts story for travel writers and journalists



Image © Shannon Woodloe | Delaware Art Museum

The Core Message

This is our statewide through-line. Every other piece of guidance in this playbook is built to support and amplify this central idea.

As the First State, Delaware has been building a creative scene since before the country existed, and what's here is genuinely original. Fine arts, performing arts, history, and working makers are all within easy reach of the entire Mid-Atlantic.

Why this works:

The phrase “genuinely original” performs double duty. It speaks to Delaware’s status as the First State while also highlighting that our creative scene is authentic and one-of-a-kind. This creates a foundation that emphasizes Delaware’s ability to punch above its weight class due to its rich history and concentration of arts and culture assets.

How to use it:

Think of this core message as your orienting frame. It is the big idea you are building from, rather than the exact copy you must use in every headline. The pillars below provide more specific language tailored for different audiences and contexts.

Messaging Pillars

The core message is the foundation. The four pillars below are how you build on it. Each one draws out a different dimension of Delaware's creative identity for a different audience. A day tripper from Philadelphia needs a different entry point than a Delaware resident who thinks there's nothing to do in their own backyard.

1 Small State, Big Creative Scene

Delaware has more than 2,500 mapped creative economy assets across all three counties including visual arts, performing arts, cultural heritage, and working makers. For a state of just over a million people, that concentration rivals states many times our size. And according to the data from the 2024 Longwoods Travel USA® report, half of overnight visitors are already participating in cultural activities when they're here, nearly double the national norm.

This is the most versatile pillar. It works for any audience and any channel, and it's as much an internal message as an external one. Many Delawareans haven't discovered what's in their own backyard. A resident who knows and is proud of what's here is one of the most credible ambassadors we have.

2 A Short Trip to a Rich Arts and Culture Scene

Delaware sits at the heart of the Mid-Atlantic's most traveled corridor. Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York City, and Washington DC are all within a short drive or Amtrak ride. For too long, Delaware has been a state people pass through rather than stop in. This pillar makes the case that stopping is worth it: world-class museum collections, live performance, working artists selling directly from their studios, and cultural heritage that predates the country.

This pillar works best for out-of-state visitor campaigns and shoulder season content. A visitor who books a weekend around a specific performance, stays the night, and spends the next morning at a gallery or maker's market is generating exactly the economic activity that makes the case for cultural tourism investment.

3 Delaware Made: Bring Home a Piece of the First State

This pillar speaks to the instinct that drives local market culture everywhere: the desire to bring home something with a story after a trip. It directly addresses the number one question at Delaware welcome centers: “Where can I buy something Delaware-made?” As the second-largest sector in our creative economy, visual arts and crafts offer visitors a tangible piece of the First State. They can bring home items created by makers in a place that has been making things since before the country existed.

This pillar is most effective for day-tripper campaigns, small-town and downtown district promotion, and content targeting visitors who are already in-state. It frames cultural tourism as a retail opportunity: find it, buy it, bring it home. For travelers, a physical object is a lasting connection they can make to a destination.

4 A Creative Scene Where Past Meets Present

Delaware has been shaping American culture for longer than it’s been a state. Clifford Brown’s jazz legacy is celebrated every June at one of the largest free jazz festivals on the East Coast. Howard Pyle’s art school trained N.C. Wyeth and put Delaware on the American artistic map. The Johnson Victrola Museum in Dover marks the spot where Eldridge Reeves Johnson invented the modern recording industry, and it is still drawing visitors today. The point isn’t that Delaware has old things. It’s that the history is still active, and the places where it happened are still hosting performances and exhibitions today.

This pillar works best for cultural heritage campaigns and history-oriented visitor segments. It’s also the pillar that most directly supports the “genuinely original” framing. Delaware’s creative identity didn’t emerge recently. It predates the country, and that’s not a story most states can tell.



Image © Rehoboth Art League

Ready-to-Use Copy

The copy below is a starting point, designed to be personalized for your specific county or organization. These were written with social media in mind, but the same language works just as well on your website, in email newsletters, or in print materials. Take a look at your own site: is there a page where this messaging could replace something more generic?

Core Messaging: Delaware Is Genuinely Original

- In Delaware, being original is a centuries-old tradition. Our galleries, stages, and studios have an authentic voice you won't find anywhere else in the Mid-Atlantic. Discover the First State's one-of-a-kind creative scene.
- There's no place quite like Delaware. Our arts and culture scene is entirely homegrown and built on generations of creative spirit. Come see why the First State has always been unique.
- Delaware has been a home for makers since before it was even a state. That original, independent spirit is still going strong today in every corner of our creative community.



Image © Spotlight Delaware Festival

Pillar 1: Small State, Big Creative Scene

- Delaware's arts scene is hiding in plain sight. From nationally recognized institutions to small-town studios, our creative scene is larger and richer than you'd ever expect.
- Delaware has over 2,500 arts and culture spots packed into our small state. You can find anything from big theaters to tiny art studios. There is something original waiting for you in every county.
- Think there's nothing to do this weekend? Look closer. You don't have to leave the state for high-quality cultural experiences. From small-town community theaters to world-renowned museums, rediscover the vibrant scene that makes the First State genuinely original.

Pillar 2: A Short Trip to a Rich Arts and Culture Scene

- Delaware is just a short drive or Amtrak ride from Philly, DC, and New York. You can find world-class galleries and theaters that are very easy to reach from anywhere in the region. It's the perfect spot for a quick and easy creative getaway.
- Drive just an hour from the city to find a different kind of creative world. Our small towns are filled with local art shops and cozy theaters. See a performance this weekend and discover why our arts scene is worth the trip.
- The arts in Delaware are active all year long. Plan a trip after the summer ends to enjoy fall festivals and cozy winter theater shows. A rich creative scene is always just a short drive away.



Image © Wilmington Children's Chorus

Pillar 3: Delaware Made: Bring Home a Piece of the First State

- From small-town art shops to local maker markets, everything here is one of a kind. You can find the perfect gift made by someone who lives right here in our state. See why Delaware is the best place for original finds.
- Delaware has been a home for builders, creators, and craftspeople since before the country existed. Today, you can visit studios in every county to see artists at work and take home something Delaware-made.
- The number one question asked at Delaware welcome centers is: “Where can I buy something Delaware-made?” Skip the mass-produced souvenirs and find a tangible piece of the First State created by local hands.

Pillar 4: A Creative Scene Where Past Meets Present

- Delaware has been shaping American culture since before we were even a state. We celebrate our deep history through the music and art we create today. Come experience a creative scene that has been 250+ years in the making.
- Our history is more than just old buildings. It is the stage for live performances and new art in our historic downtowns. Discover how our past and present work together to create a voice you won't find anywhere else.
- We were the first state to build a creative scene, and we are still doing it differently. Visit our museums and galleries to see how Delaware's original spirit lives on today. Explore the legacy of the people who made us the First State.

Finding and Sharing Photo and Video Content

When scouting for content to amplify, prioritize authentic experience over traditional production value. Partners have identified three types of content that perform best:

- **The work itself:** photos of artwork, performances, and musicians
- **People doing the work:** makers mid-process, musicians playing, performers in action
- **People experiencing the work:** audiences engaged, visitors participating, people together at arts events

A smartphone photo of a maker hands-on in their studio or a short video clip of a high-energy performance is far more compelling than a perfectly staged empty room. If an organization or artist you work with is struggling to capture these moments, direct them to the Arts Organization Discoverability Guide.

Delaware Arts & Culture Content Library

The Delaware Arts Alliance is building a centralized digital library that tourism partners can pull from directly. All assets are submitted by local creators and organizations and include photographer credit, organization name, and a brief description. Any known limitations on usage rights are noted.

This library is a growing resource. If you can't find what you're looking for, reach out to DAA directly at info@delawareartsalliance.org.

Access the Library

To encourage artists and arts organizations you work with to contribute, share this submission form:

Share



Image © The Dover Art League

Media Pitch Guidance

Wilmington's restaurant scene earned national coverage through years of intentional promotion. Delaware's arts and culture scene is now in that same process. Every piece of coverage builds the record that makes the next pitch easier.

Travel writers and journalists need a specific story, not just a destination overview. A successful pitch needs a news peg ("why now?") and a broader frame ("why Delaware?")

The News Peg (The "Why Now?")

- **Superlative:** The oldest continuously operating theater in the country or the largest free jazz festival on the East Coast.
- **New investment:** A major renovation or a new cultural venue that signals a growing destination.
- **Major debut:** A touring production or an artist with a national profile making an appearance.
- **Economic story:** A data point connecting arts to overnight stays or local spending.
- **Individual profile:** A specific artist or organization gives a journalist somewhere to anchor the story, and gives readers someone to follow.

The Frame (The “Why Delaware?”)

- **Hidden gem:** Delaware is one of the most overlooked arts destinations in the Mid-Atlantic, yet it has an arts density that rivals much larger states. The story is the surprise of finding 2,500+ creative assets packed into a state you can drive across in a few hours.
- **Maker economy:** Unlike regions where the arts are concentrated in one city, Delaware has a working creative class spread across all three counties. Visitors can buy something directly from an artist’s studio in a small town and know it was made right there.
- **Shoulder season:** While people may expect things to quiet down after Labor Day, Delaware’s creative scene provides a reason to stay. Our fall and spring calendars are packed with festivals and performances that extend the travel season long after the beach crowds leave.
- **Cultural moment:** As audiences push back against AI-generated content and screen saturation, handmade work and live performance are having a cultural moment. Delaware’s concentration of working makers and live arts venues positions it directly in that story.

Questions?

Contact the Delaware Arts Alliance: info@delawareartsalliance.org