



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 7, 2016

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR RAHM EMANUEL AND CHOOSE CHICAGO ANNOUNCE NEW TOURISM CHIEF

Industry Veteran and Former Brand USA CMO David Whitaker to Oversee Choose Chicago and Continue Drive to Meet Mayor Emanuel's Goal of 55 Million Visitors by 2020

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Choose Chicago Board Chair Desiree Rogers today named David Whitaker as President and CEO of Choose Chicago. Whitaker most recently served as chief marketing officer for Brand USA, the nation's official destination marketing organization based in Washington D.C., where he oversaw the fully integrated marketing campaigns in 14 international markets as well as Brand USA's international trade offices.

"David Whitaker is a tourism champion with the vision and leadership required to steer Chicago's visitor industry to new heights," Mayor Emanuel said. "Over the past five years, Chicago's tourism industry has strengthened our city's economy and provided more than 15,000 jobs. With more than 25 years in the industry, David Whitaker has the experience and expertise to build on this progress by bringing even more meetings and events to our city and all of the economic opportunities they create for Chicago's residents."

Prior to joining Brand USA, Whitaker served as president and CEO of Tourism Toronto for eight years. During this time, he implemented an aggressive and successful strategy to reinvigorate Toronto as an exciting leisure and business travel destination, which included marketing and advertising focused on attracting high-value travelers from major U.S. cities, the United Kingdom, Germany, China, Japan, and Brazil. Whitaker also spent 17 years with the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, where he most-recently served as executive vice president and chief marketing officer helping shape Miami's international image.

After an extensive nationwide search conducted by a 20-member search committee led by Rogers, Whitaker was selected because of his destination marketing expertise and strategic vision.

"We are proud and delighted to announce David Whitaker as the next CEO of Choose Chicago," Rogers said. "David is an industry veteran who has successfully increased domestic and international visitation to two major North American cities. He is the kind of leader we need to move the needle and exceed Mayor Emanuel's goal of 55 million visitors by 2020 and propel Chicago's position as a leading U.S. destination for international travelers."

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 507, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

Whitaker will lead Choose Chicago's sales and marketing efforts focused on increasing overnight visitation from regional, national and international markets. He will officially transition to his new role as President and CEO of Choose Chicago on July 6.

"I am thrilled to be coming to Chicago," Whitaker said. "The city offers a unique and energizing global city experience that appeals to travelers from around the world. I am honored to join the Choose Chicago team and help accelerate the growth of Chicago's visitor industry and convention business."

Chicago saw record visitation in 2015 with more than 52 million visitors. Since 2010, Chicago's tourism industry has added more than 15,000 jobs, including an estimated 3,800 new jobs in 2015. The city also continues to be a leading destination for meetings and conventions ranking number two in Cvent's 2016 Top 50 Meeting Destinations in the U.S.

Tourism in 2015 generated \$935 million in total tax revenue, \$2.2 billion in revenue for Chicago's hotels and \$124.1 million in hotel tax revenue. Every dollar invested in Choose Chicago generates \$25 in state and local taxes.

#